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Mexico Is Not Colombia

Alternative Historical Analogies for Responding to the Challenge of Violent Drug-Trafficking Organizations

Supporting Case Studies

Christopher Paul, Colin P. Clarke, Chad C. Serena

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Preface

The full scope and details of the challenges posed by Mexico's violent drug-trafficking organizations are not well understood, and optimal strategies to combat these organizations have not been identified. The associated security challenges are not confined to Mexico; indeed, many have spilled over into neighboring countries, including the United States. Scholars often compare these security challenges with those faced by Colombia, but there are vocal critics of this approach. If Mexico is not like Colombia, what is it like? Clearly, there are historical security challenges (and corresponding resolutions) that are germane to contemporary Mexico. To answer the question posed above, it will be important to evaluate the historical record, identify the correct comparisons, and make the correct inferences based on those comparisons. This study sought to make better historical comparisons with Mexico by identifying cases of "resource" insurgency (those in which insurgents do not seek to control the government but simply to eliminate state interference with their exploitation of resources), cases of warlordism or ungoverned territories, and cases of efforts to combat organized crime.

This report presents the case studies that supported this research effort. A companion report, *Mexico Is Not Colombia: Alternative Historical Analogies for Responding to the Challenge of Violent Drug-Trafficking Organizations*, RR-548/1, offers an overview of the study's methodology, including case selection and the analytic framework that guided the research. It also summarizes the primary findings from the comparison cases and puts forward several recommendations that

Mexico's government could pursue in an effort to address and resolve its current security challenges. That volume is available at http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR548z1.html.

Readers of this series may also be interested in the related RAND report *The Challenge of Violent Drug-Trafficking Organizations: An Assessment of Mexican Security Based on Existing RAND Research on Urban Unrest, Insurgency, and Defense-Sector Reform*, by Christopher Paul, Agnes Gereben Schaefer, and Colin P. Clarke, MG-1125-OSD, 2011.

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Summary

Drug-related violence has become a very serious problem in Mexico. Violent drug-trafficking organizations (VDTOs) produce, transship, and deliver tens of billions of dollars' worth of narcotics into the United States annually. The activities of VDTOs are not confined to drug trafficking; they extend to numerous other criminal enterprises, including human trafficking, weapon trafficking, kidnapping, money laundering, extortion, bribery, and racketeering. Then, there is the violence: Recent incidents have included assassinations of politicians and judges; attacks on rival organizations, associated civilians (i.e., the families of members of competing groups or of government officials), and the police and other security forces; and seemingly random violence against innocent bystanders.

The full scope and details of the threat posed by VDTOs are not well understood, and optimal strategies to combat these organizations have not been identified. Furthermore, the associated security challenges are not confined to Mexico. Many are rooted in (or have spilled over into) neighboring countries, including the United States. Scholars often compare these security challenges with those faced by Colombia, but there are vocal critics of this approach. As indicated by the title of this report, we agree that Mexico is not Colombia. While certain characteristics of the Colombian case do provide useful lessons for Mexico, the historical record shows that security challenges (and their resolutions) from other times and places are also germane to contemporary Mexico and should not be overlooked. To more thoroughly and accurately examine the current security situation in Mexico, it is important

to evaluate this historical record, identify the correct comparisons, and make the correct inferences based on those comparisons. This volume presents the case studies that supported a study guided by the following key questions:

- What classes or categories of conflicts have characteristics in common with contemporary Mexican security challenges and thus might be good comparisons by being "like" Mexico?
- Which individual cases within those categories might be instructive comparisons?
- What specific challenges characterized those comparative cases, and which of those challenges does Mexico face?
- To what extent were those challenges resolved in the historical cases, and which of those solutions could provide useful lessons for Mexico?
- Ultimately, what can a range of different historical cases tell us about the prospects for and approaches to resolving Mexico's security challenges?

Approach

Our principal approach to answering these questions involved conducting a series of historical case studies and comparing the challenges they faced (and the solutions they found) to the security situation in Mexico. This report, the second of two volumes, presents ten supporting case studies that we used to assess the extent to which Colombia is a good analogy for Mexico and to evaluate the relative merits of other comparisons. We chose the remaining nine cases carefully to maximize our prospects for finding reasonably informative alternative comparisons. A companion report, *Mexico Is Not Colombia: Alternative Historical Analogies for Responding to the Challenge of Violent Drug-Trafficking Organizations*, RR-548/1, presents our analyses of the cases and com-

parisons, along with the study's broader conclusions and recommendations for Mexico's government.[1]

Finding the Right Comparisons

Policy is routinely informed by historical analogy, and policymakers regularly seek to learn the lessons of history. In commenting on the misuse of history, Ernest May concludes that policymakers frequently do not "pause to analyze the case, test its fitness, or even ask in what ways it might be misleading." He continues, "Seeing a trend running toward the present, they tend to assume that it will continue into the future, not stopping to consider what produced it or why a linear projection might prove to be mistaken."[2] In this context, the challenge is to identify the correct comparisons. If the violence that haunts Mexico is similar to the conflict that the Colombian government stared down, then Plan Colombia may indeed be a reasonable blueprint for dealing with Mexican VDTOs. However, if these two cases are qualitatively different (as we believe they are), then they would require at least partially different solutions. What, then, are the correct comparisons? What are the correct characterizations of the challenges posed by Mexico's VDTOs, and which historical cases have the most in common with these contemporary challenges and can thus best inform an evaluation of Mexico's policy options?

Colombia is often offered as an analog for Mexico, but it has also been derided as an inappropriate comparison.[3] While Colombia cer-

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[1] See Christopher Paul, Colin P. Clarke, and Chad C. Serena, *Mexico Is Not Colombia: Alternative Historical Analogies for Responding to the Challenge of Violent Drug-Trafficking Organization*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-548/1, 2014.

[2] Ernest May, *"Lessons" of the Past: The Use and Misuse of History in American Foreign Policy*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1973, p. xi.

[3] On Colombia as an analog for Mexico, see, for example, June S. Beittel, *Mexico's Drug Trafficking Organizations: Source and Scope of the Rising Violence*, Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, January 7, 2011; Ted Galen Carpenter, *Mexico Is Becoming the New Colombia*, Washington, D.C.: Cato Institute, Foreign Policy Briefing No. 87, November 15, 2005; Vanda Felbab-Brown, *The Violent Drug Market in Mexico and Lessons from Colombia*, Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, Foreign Policy Paper No. 12, March 2009; Elyssa Pachico, "A Few Lessons from Colombia for Mexico," *Colombia Reports*,

tainly faced a challenge from VDTOs, both the circumstances and the threat differed from contemporary Mexico in several important ways: the nature of the perpetrators, territory, geography, targets, and tactics; the character of the violence; and the state's ability to respond. For these reasons, we join critics in rejecting Colombia, by itself, as the most instructive analogy for Mexico.

Previous RAND research on Mexican security suggested four categories of cases with possible comparability or relevance to Mexico's struggle against VDTOs: cases of warlordism, cases of ungoverned territories, earnest efforts to combat organized crime, and "resource" insurgencies.[4]

Resource insurgencies are cases in which insurgents do not seek to win control of the state or establish their own government but simply to eliminate state interference with their exploitation of natural resources (such as diamonds, drugs, or timber). Cases of warlordism and ungoverned territories are similar to resource insurgencies, but in these instances the state does not sufficiently combat the rejection of its authority to earn the case the *insurgency* label. Whether or not they have become something more, Mexican VDTOs are certainly an instance of organized crime, so previous efforts to combat organized crime might provide fruitful analogies. Specifically, when governments

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May 24, 2010; and Rory Carroll, "Hillary Clinton: Mexican Drugs War Is Colombia-Style Insurgency," *The Guardian*, September 9, 2010.

Disagreement with this comparison can be found in, for example, Paul Rexton Kan and Phil Williams, "Afterword: Criminal Violence in Mexico—A Dissenting Analysis," *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 21, No. 1, March 2010; Renee G. Scherlen, "The 'Colombianization' of Mexico? The Evolving Mexican Drug War," paper presented at the Southern Political Science Association Conference, New Orleans, La., January 7–10, 2009; Ken Ellingwood, "Why Mexico Is Not the New Colombia When It Comes to Drug Cartels," *Los Angeles Times*, September 25, 2010; Kenneth Michel, *Mexico and the Cocaine Epidemic: The New Colombia or a New Problem?* thesis, Monterey, Calif.: Naval Postgraduate School, December 2010; Oxford Analytica, "Mexico/Colombia: Organized Crime Lessons Mislead," January 20, 2011; and "Mexico Drug War Not Comparable to Colombia: Obama," Reuters, September 10, 2010.

[4] Christopher Paul, Agnes Gereben Schaefer, and Colin P. Clarke, *The Challenge of Violent Drug-Trafficking Organizations: An Assessment of Mexican Security Based on Existing RAND Research on Urban Unrest, Insurgency, and Defense-Sector Reform*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MG-1125-OSD, 2011.

have actively opposed organized crime in other places and times, what has proven effective, and what pitfalls have been encountered?

By examining selected cases of warlordism, ungoverned spaces, resource insurgencies, and efforts to combat organized crime, we can identify which cases are genuinely analogous to contemporary Mexico (and in what respects) and which approaches to meeting these security challenges have proven successful or unsuccessful.

Case Selection

Figure S.1 outlines the case selection process we used to get to identify the comparative cases presented in this report. See Chapter Three of the companion volume for a more detailed explanation of the process.[5] Table S.1 lists the cases selected for analysis.

Figure S.1
Case Selection Process

Literature review identified 71 candidates

Dropped 45 cases coded as resource insurgencies that were really traditional insurgencies

Dropped 9 cases of ungoverned space with no associated conflict

Dropped 8 cases of organized crime

Added Colombia

Left 10 cases
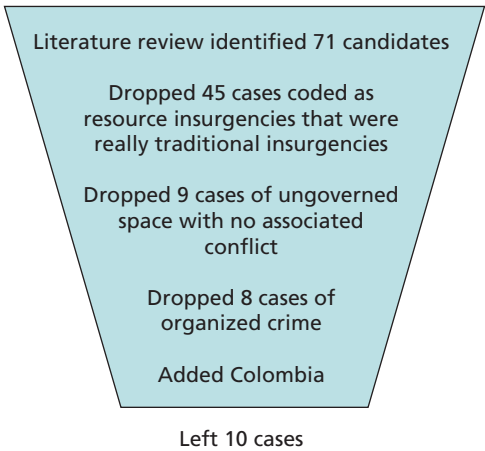
RAND *RR548/2-S.1*

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[5]   See Paul, Clarke, and Serena, 2014.

Table S.1
Cases Selected for Comparison with Mexico

Case	Years
Colombia	1994–2010
Peru	1980–1992
The Balkans	1991–2010
West Africa	1990–2010
The Caucasus	1990–2012
Somalia	1991–2010
Angola	1992–2010
Burma	1988–2012
Tajikistan	1992–2008
Afghanistan	2001–2013

Analytic Framework

Although all cases presented here all have elements in common with Mexico and individually offer cautions, advice, or lessons for future Mexican security efforts, broad comparison remains somewhat tricky. We selected cases that fell into the four common categories mentioned earlier (warlordism, ungoverned spaces, resource insurgencies, and organized crime), but the detailed case studies reveal a wide range of challenges and solutions. Thus, there is no simple way to take the combination of efforts that "solved Colombia" and compare them with the efforts that "solved the Balkans," then extrapolate a recipe for success in Mexico. However, with a little extra nuance and complexity we were able to compare how similar challenges were addressed more or less effectively across the historical cases and, where Mexico faces those same challenges, infer which solutions might work (or are more or less feasible than others).

Table S.2 lists ten challenges (A–J) that appeared in many of the historical cases. Mexico faces eight of these challenges. The col-

umns in Table S.2 represent the historical cases (with Mexico in the last column), while the rows of the table are paired. The upper row of each pair shows the extent of the challenge at the peak of the conflict, and the lower row shows the extent of improvement or progress toward addressing the challenge at the end of the case-study period, usually the end of the conflict. So, for example, the uppermost and leftmost cells of the table indicate that Colombia suffered from high levels of violence (challenge A) to a moderate extent (yellow shading) at the peak of the conflict there, but violence improved moderately (⬆) by 2010.

Table S.2 also summarizes the comparative core of the analyses presented in the companion volume, showing which historical cases faced which challenges (and the extent of those challenges) in common with Mexico—and against which of those challenges the government made progress or failed to make progress—allowing us to thoughtfully identify instructive points of comparison.[6]

Results and Conclusions

Mexico Is Not Colombia, Nor Is It Any of the Other Cases

Through this research, we sought to identify the best possible comparative cases to use to make analogies to Mexico. We began with the observation that Mexico is not particularly analogous to Colombia, even though Colombia is the most frequently invoked comparison case. However, we are forced to conclude that none of the other cases we examined are much more analogous, and some are notably less so. *That said, all the cases, including Colombia, share some important contextual commonalities and challenges with Mexico and thus provide useful lessons.* The trick, then, is to isolate the aspects that provide the best opportunities for comparison and remain mindful of the differences. While there is not a single premium analogous case for Mexico, we identified several cases that should compete with Colombia as partial analogies in future policy discussions: Peru, the Balkans, West Africa,

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[6] The full analysis and description of the study's methodology can be found in Paul, Clarke, and Serena, 2014.

Table S.2
Challenges Faced and Improvement by Historical Cases

Cells are color-coded (G = green, Y = yellow, R = red, blank = no data); arrows (↑, ↑↑, ↑↑↑, ↓) indicate direction/degree of change.

Challenge	Colombia	Peru	The Balkans	West Africa	The Caucasus	Somalia	Angola	Burma	Tajikistan	Afghanistan	Mexico
A. High violence	Y	R	R	R	Y	R	R	Y	G	R	R
Progress toward resolving violence	G ↑	G ↑↑	G ↑↑	Y ↑	G ↑	Y ↑	G ↑↑	Y ↑	G	Y ↑	
B. Anomic violence or mayhem/indiscriminate violence	G	G	R	G	G	G	Y	G	G	G	R
Progress toward resolving anomic violence	G	G	G ↑↑↑	Y ↑	G	Y ↑	G ↑	G	G	G	
C. Insurgency/competition for state control	R	R	R	G	G	R	R	R	R	R	G
Progress toward defeating insurgency/securing state control	G ↑↑	G ↑↑	G ↑↑↑	G	Y ↑	G	G ↑↑↑	Y ↑	G	R	
D. Ethnically motivated violence	G	G	R	Y	Y	Y	Y	R	G	Y	G
Extent to which ethnic tensions were reduced	G	G	Y ↑	Y ↑	Y	Y	Y	Y ↑	G	Y	
E. Lack of economic opportunities	Y	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
Extent to which economic opportunities improved	Y ↑	Y ↑	Y ↑	Y ↑	Y ↑	R	G ↑↑	Y ↑	R	R	
F. High level of weapon availability	Y	G	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
Extent to which weapon availability was reduced	Y	G	Y ↑	Y ↑	Y	Y	Y ↑	Y	R	R	
G. Competition over a resource (e.g., drugs, diamonds)	R	R	G	R	G	G	R	R	Y	R	R
Extent to which competition ended or resource was secured	R	R	G	Y ↑	G	G	G ↑↑	Y ↑	Y	R	
H. Ungoverned spaces	R	Y	Y	R	Y	R	R	Y	Y	G	R
Progress toward extending control in formerly ungoverned spaces	Y ↑	G ↑	G ↑	Y ↑	G ↑	R	Y ↑	Y ↑	G	R	
I. State/institutional weakness	Y	Y	Y	R	Y	R	R	Y	R	Y	Y
Extent to which state or institutions were strengthened	G ↑	G ↑	G ↑	R	Y	R	R	Y ↑	R	Y ↑	
J. Patronage/corruption	R	Y	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
Extent to which patronage/corruption was reduced/controlled	Y ↑	R ↓	Y ↑	Y ↑	Y ↑	R	R	R	R	R	

How to interpret Table S.2:

Level of violence		Level of improvement	
🟩	Low or tolerable	⬆	Moderate improvement
🟨	Moderate	⬆⬆	Significant improvement
🟥	High	⬆⬆⬆	Massive improvement/complete resolution
		⬇	Worsened

and the Caucasus.[7] The remaining cases are much less analogous to Mexico but can still provide lessons in discrete areas, even if their primary value is in serving as negative examples.

Lessons Highlighted in the Case Narratives

Each case study, regardless of whether it proved to be a particularly good comparison case for Mexico, offered some useful lessons, even if only as an example of what can happen if challenges like those faced by Mexico are allowed to run unchecked. Here, we summarize those lessons, with supporting cases listed in parentheses:

- Reform and improvement take time. (Colombia, the Balkans, Somalia, and Tajikistan)
- External supporters can really help. (Colombia, the Balkans, and West Africa)
- Improving governance and government capability can help address multiple challenges. (Colombia, West Africa, the Caucasus, and Afghanistan)
- Unity of effort among law enforcement and military forces is important. (Peru)

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[7]   Our Balkans case study focuses primarily on Bosnia but also includes Kosovo and Croatia. Similarly, our West Africa case study is centered on Sierra Leone but also addresses Liberia, and our Caucasus case study uses Georgia (South Caucasus) and Chechnya (North Caucasus) as representative cases. We opted to compile these country cases to capture the regional effects of the security challenge and overlap among the conflicts there.

- Reducing ungoverned spaces by extending control and governance can help address multiple challenges. (Peru, the Caucasus, and Afghanistan)
- Improving social services and changing the economic opportunity structure can help decrease violence. (The Caucasus and Angola)
- Empowering locals can contribute positively to security. (Peru)
- Police reform can help reduce violence and support improved governance. (The Balkans and Somalia)
- Effective efforts to fight organized crime balance both prevention and repression. (The Balkans)
- Prioritizing the most dangerous and violent organizations can help reduce violence. (West Africa)
- Co-optation of drug-trafficking organizations can work, but it can also have less attractive overall outcomes. (Burma)
- Corruption and poor economic conditions can exacerbate other challenges. (All cases)

Factors Contributing to Improvement in the Historical Cases

As part of the cross-case comparative analysis presented in the companion volume, we coded a number of factors related to strategies or efforts that were undertaken to mitigate challenges in the historical cases.[8] We then examined the correlation between the presence of those efforts and progress toward resolving the selected challenges for cases in which a given challenge was present. Although the number of cases involved is small enough that we do not report specific correlation coefficients, Table S.3 does indicate where we found a strong correlation between earnest efforts in an area and improvement toward resolving one of the challenges.[9] Shaded cells indicate strong correlations.

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[8]   See Paul, Clarke, and Serena, 2014.

[9]   We coded many other factors that did *not* yield a correlation and thus are not reported in the table. Noteworthy in this regard are drug crop eradication efforts and specific strategies for dealing with an adversary (e.g., organizational decapitation efforts, focusing on groups

Table S.3
Efforts Consistently Correlated with Improvement in the Historical Cases

Effort Correlated with Improvement	Challenge							
	B	C	E	F	G	H	I	J
State-/institution-building or reform	■	■	■				■	■
Focus on law enforcement, judicial reform	■		■					
Military professionalization	■	■				■	■	
Strengthening the economy/increasing economic opportunities	■	■	■		■	■	■	■
Decreasing negative opportunities	■		■		■	■		
Counterinsurgency		■			■			
Extending control over sovereign territory	■		■	■				
Extending firm control over a contentious commodity					■			
Mobilizing public outrage	■	■						■
Combating corruption								■
External intervention/peacekeepers	■			■				

NOTE: Challenge A is omitted from the table because progress toward resolving violence was an indirect result of challenges B, C, and D. See Table S.2 for descriptions of the challenges.

However, correlation is not causation. In many of these relationships, especially given the frequency with which individual challenges are correlated with multiple areas of effort, correlations could be spurious, with the relationship depending on some third factor. To hedge

one at a time, focusing on all groups simultaneously). This is not to suggest that those factors were not important in individual cases (indeed, the detailed case narratives suggest that some of these factors are important); they were not consistently correlated with improvement across the cases facing the challenges addressed in this study.

against this possibility and get closer to causation, we sought to use the narratives to confirm these relationships. For each relationship, we used the case narrative to test the sequence of the relationship (that is, to confirm that the purported cause did, in fact, come chronologically before the improvement in the challenge area). We then identified the extent to which the relationship contributed to the narrative explanation of the case, validating its presence as part of a plausible causal argument. Table S.4 presents the results of this validation exercise.

Table S.4
Efforts That Contributed to Improvement in the Historical Cases

Efforts That Contributed to Improvement	Challenge							
	B	C	E	F	G	H	I	J
State-/institution-building or reform			light green				dark green	dark green
Focus on law enforcement, judicial reform			light green					dark green
Military professionalization							light green	
Strengthening the economy/ increasing economic opportunities			dark green					
Decreasing negative opportunities			dark green		dark green		light green	
Counterinsurgency		dark green			light green	dark green	light green	
Extending control over sovereign territory	dark green	dark green	dark green	light green		dark green		
Extending firm control over a contentious commodity	light green				light green			
Mobilizing public outrage								light green
Combating corruption								light green
External intervention/peacekeepers	dark green			light green				

NOTE: Light green shading indicates that the effort was validated as contributing to improvement in some case studies. Dark green shading indicates that the effort was strongly validated a contributing to improvement in multiple case studies. Challenge A is omitted from the table because progress toward resolving violence was an indirect result of challenges B, C, and D.

As anticipated, several of the correlations observed proved to be spurious correlations in one or more of the cases, lagging improvement in one or more challenge areas rather than preceding it. Others, while present as correlations, were judged not to be important contributors to the resolution of challenges in a significant number of cases. Table S.4 shows only those efforts that were confirmed as important contributors to improvement in listed challenge areas in multiple cases. Efforts highlighted with dark green shading were validated as strong contributors to improvement in the referenced challenge areas in almost every case in which they were present.

Recommendations

Collectively, the historical narratives, the comparative analysis, consideration of the Mexican case in its own context, and a review of existing proposals and suggestions for Mexico in light of the lessons gleaned from the historical cases point the following broad recommendations for Mexico's government to consider in its efforts to address the country's current security challenges:

- Focus efforts on the most violent of the VDTOs by both disincentivizing violence and removing the worst offenders.
- Engage in government institution-building and reform, with specific focus on
  - law enforcement and judicial reform
  - extending control over (and government services to) all sovereign Mexican territory.
- Engage in proactive counterviolence efforts, including anti-*mara* (anti-gang) laws and alternative opportunities for current and potential members (e.g., education, training, employment).
- Investigate ways to better leverage public outrage, vet and selectively support citizen militias, and push law-enforcement reform to the local level to enable legitimate community policing.

- Measure and evaluate the state's ability to control the use of force, enforce political decisions within sovereign territory, and repel attacks against security forces.
- Increase policymakers' willingness to accept international support, especially from the United States.

Note that we are not the first to make these recommendations. However, the fact that our empirical research echoes them is a strong endorsement indeed.[10]

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[10] For a more detailed exploration of these recommendations, see Paul, Clarke, and Serena, 2014.

Acknowledgments

Abbreviations

AUC	Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia [United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia]
COIN	counterinsurgency
DDR	disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration
DTO	drug-trafficking organization
ECOMOG	Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group
ELN	Ejército de Liberación Nacional [National Liberation Army]
EO	Executive Outcomes
FARC	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias Colombianas [Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia]
GDP	gross domestic product
ICU	Islamic Courts Union
IMF	International Monetary Fund
JTF-O	Joint Task Force Omega
MPLA	Movimiento Popular de Libertação de Angola [People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola]

MTRA	Movimiento Revolucionario Túpac Amaru [Túpac Amaru Revolutionary Movement]
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	nongovernmental organization
NPFL	National Patriotic Front of Liberia
NPRC	National Provisional Ruling Council
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PELRP	Pilot Emergency Labor Redeployment Project
PIRA	Provisional Irish Republican Army
PKK	Kurdistan Workers' Party
RPG	rocket-propelled grenade
RUF	Revolutionary United Front
SDG	Srpska Dobrovoljačka Garda [Serb Volunteer Guard]
UN	United Nations
UNAMSIL	United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNITA	União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola [National Union for the Total Independence of Angola]
UNPROFOR	United Nations Protection Force
VDTO	violent drug-trafficking organization

Colombia (1994–2010)

Case Selection Categories: Resource Insurgency, Ungoverned Spaces, High Level of Organized Crime

Colombia has been enmeshed in an ongoing cycle of terrorism and insurgency since the late 1940s, when "La Violencia" claimed the lives of more than 200,000 of its citizens.[1] The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) launched an insurgency in 1963 and is still fighting the Colombian government today. In an effort to counter the influence and power of insurgent groups like the FARC and Colombia's second largest guerrilla group, the National Liberation Army (ELN), right-wing paramilitaries formed a nationwide coordination committee under the umbrella of the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) in the mid-1990s.[2] Colombia is the case most frequently compared with Mexico, but beyond the obvious similarities—such as the drug trade, high levels of violence, and common language, culture, and religion—just how comparable is Colombia to Mexico, and is it more comparable than any of the other cases discussed here?

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[1] Angel Rabasa, John Gordon, Peter Chalk, Audra K. Grant, K. Scott McMahon, Stephanie Pezard, Caroline Reilly, David Ucko, and S. Rebecca Zimmerman, *From Insurgency to Stability, Volume II: Insights from Selected Case Studies*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MG-1111/2-OSD, 2011, p. 41.

[2] Jorge A. Restrepo and Michal Spagat, "Colombia's Tipping Point?" *Survival*, Vol. 47, No. 2, 2005, p. 135. A detailed history of the development of Colombia's paramilitary groups can be found in Winifred Tate, "Paramilitaries in Colombia," *Brown Journal of World Affairs*, Vol. 8, No. 1, Winter–Spring 2001.

Conflict and Violence in Colombia

During the first phase of the conflict (1994–2001), the security environment in Colombia was characterized by rampant instability and continuous political violence. Throughout the 1990s, the Colombian state faced a panoply of security threats, including terrorists, insurgents, paramilitaries, and drug traffickers. At various points, the Colombian security forces battled the FARC, ELN, AUC, and several major drug cartels, including both the Medellin and Cali organizations. Although the Colombian government faced a diverse range of threats, the United States was primarily concerned with fighting the "War on Drugs" and thus focused its foreign assistance quite narrowly.

As the state weakened, Colombia descended into an orgy of violence as Pablo Escobar and the Medellin Cartel solidified their grasp on the Colombian state. Escobar grew so powerful and his image as a modern-day Robin Hood became so widespread that his cartel operated with impunity. Judges and government officials who would not be bought were killed. *Sicariato* was a term used to describe the industry that developed around contract killing in Colombia.[3] After a U.S.-trained Colombian National Police team killed Escobar, the Cali Cartel filled the void left by the demise of the Medellin Cartel. The Cali Cartel succeeded in penetrating the Colombian state through a campaign of corruption, developing a robust counterintelligence network, and specializing in a suite of organized criminal activities that further destabilized Colombia. An already weak Colombian state became overwhelmed by the three-headed monster of narcotics, violence, and corruption, a condition that made the country ripe for state failure. The following are just a few brief snapshots of the troubles that plagued Bogota:

- In the 1990s, "common criminals" kidnapped 4,946 people while the FARC kidnapped 3,943, the ELN 3,307, "other

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[3]   David E. Spencer, Carlos O. Ospina, David R. Moreno, Alejandro Arbeláez, Juan Carlos Gomez, Carlos Berrios, and Jorge L. Vargas, *Colombia's Road to Recovery: Security and Governance 1982–2010*, Washington, D.C.: Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies, National Defense University, 2011, p. 6.

groups" 2,219, the Popular Liberation Army [Ejército Popular de Liberación] 1,307, and paramilitary groups an additional 193.[4] During Andrés Pastrana's four-year presidential term, Colombia averaged nine kidnappings *per day*.[5]

- From the late 1990s through 2004, right-wing paramilitaries were tied to more than three-quarters of massacres and extrajudicial killings in Colombia.[6]
- Bogota has more than 12,000 gang members, and 80 gangs with a combined 15,000 members operate in Medellin, Cali, Bucaramanga, Baranquilla, and Cartagena.[7]

Explaining the Outbreak of Violence

Like many longstanding conflicts, no single factor can be identified as the sole reason for Colombia's descent into violence. According to Harvey Kline, the government has failed at state-building because Colombia has historically been a weak state.[8] While this pithy analysis reeks of tautology, there is something to it. Since the time of La Violencia, Colombia's civil war that unfolded over the course of a decade between 1948 and 1958, the central government in Bogota has suffered from a case of fragmented sovereignty complemented by a "system of

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[4]   Harvey F. Kline, "Colombia: Lawlessness, Drug Trafficking, and Carving Up the State," in Robert I. Rotberg, ed., *State Failure and State Weakness in a Time of Terror*, Cambridge, Mass., and Washington, D.C.: World Peace Foundation and Brookings Institution Press, 2003, p. 174.

[5]   Kline, 2003, p. 173.

[6]   Marc Chernick, "FARC-EP: Las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia–Ejército del Pueblo," in Marianne Heiberg, Brendan O'Leary, and John Tirman, eds., *Terror, Insurgency, and the State: Ending Protracted Conflicts*, Philadelphia, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007, p. 58.

[7]   Nazih Richani, "Fragmentation of Sovereignty and Violent Non-State Actors in Colombia," in Klejda Mulaj, ed., *Violent Non-State Actors in World Politics*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2010, p. 42.

[8]   Kline, 2003, p. 175.

violence" that "acquires its own dynamic and political economy which allow its perpetuation over a long period of time."[9]

The Illicit Economy, Crime, and Violence

The nonstate actors in the Colombian conflict—drug-trafficking organizations (DTOs), insurgents, terrorists, and paramilitaries—each participated in various forms of criminal activities, including kidnapping, extortion, and blackmail of multinational, national, and local commercial enterprises from cattle to bananas, coal, and retail interests.[10] Aside from the lack of effective state forces, Colombian traffickers benefit from a physical geography that is hospitable to illicit activity. Colombia's borders with both Venezuela and Brazil include swamps and rivers, allowing traffickers to move unmolested throughout the region.[11]

Both the FARC and ELN funded their insurgent activities through a range of activities, including narcotics smuggling and trafficking, extortion of both local government and other drug traffickers, investments in front companies, and money laundering.[12] The ELN targeted multinational oil companies, while the FARC set its sights

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[9] Richani, 2010, p. 32. For more on the political economy of FARC violence, in particular, see Jennifer S. Holmes, Sheila Amin Gutiérrez de Piñeres, and Kevin M. Curtin, "A Subnational Study of Insurgency: FARC Violence in the 1990s," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 30, No. 3, 2007. See also Jennifer S. Holmes, Sheila Amin Gutiérrez de Piñeres, and Kevin M. Curtin, *Guns, Drugs, and Development in Colombia*, Austin, Tex.: University of Texas Press, 2008.

[10] Marc Chernick, "Economic Resources and Internal Armed Conflicts: Lessons from the Colombian Case," in Cynthia J. Arnson and I. William Zartman, eds., *Rethinking the Economics of War: The Intersection of Need, Creed, and Greed*, Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2005, p. 180. For more on how group goals, the political environment, and membership influence the types of criminal activities that a given armed group undertakes, see Bilal Y. Saab and Alexandra W. Taylor, "Criminality and Armed Groups: A Comparative Study of FARC and Paramilitary Groups in Colombia," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 32, No. 6, 2009.

[11] Kim Cragin and Bruce Hoffman, *Arms Trafficking and Colombia*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MR-1468-DIA, 2003, p. 10.

[12] Richani, 2010, p. 37.

on gold and other mining companies.[13] But for all of the violence carried out by insurgent groups, it was the right-wing paramilitaries that gained the most notorious reputation for violence and criminal activity. Indeed, the AUC was implicated in every facet of the drug trade—taxing drug production, running cocaine laboratories, protecting trafficking routes, and smuggling the drugs themselves.

AUC leaders became some of the wealthiest landowners in Colombia, with estimated holdings of between 3 million and 5 million hectares, worth approximately $2.4 billion.[14] In addition to combating leftist guerrilla groups and making money, the AUC joined with cattle ranchers, agribusinesses, large landowners, and conservative political entrepreneurs to stymie deals related to land redistribution, a primary objective of the Marxist-oriented insurgent groups.[15] Many of the ideological reasons for the violence in Colombia do not pertain to Mexico, where profit is the key to understanding the violent drug-trafficking organizations (VDTOs). The emergence of the AUC and various paramilitary groups throughout Colombia introduced another substate actor into the conflict. Because the AUC remained outside government's control, it constituted another challenge to Bogota's legitimacy. In the late 1990s, at the height of its power, the AUC was strong enough to displace both the FARC and the ELN from territory that had been traditional strongholds. Finally, Colombian authorities viewed the threat from the AUC differently from that posed by the FARC. The former, although beyond state control, was not actively anti-state; the latter has been the most active anti-state insurgency in contemporary Colombian history.[16]

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[13] Francisco Gutiérrez Sanín, *Criminal Rebels? A Discussion of War and Criminality from the Colombian Experience*, London: London School of Economics, Working Paper No. 27, April 2003, p. 9.

[14] Richani, 2010, p. 38.

[15] Richani, 2010, p. 39.

[16] The authors are thankful to Angel Rabasa for this point.

State Failure and Weak Governance

The government of suffered numerous scandals under President Ernesto Samper's administration. In 1995, Samper was accused of having links to the Cali Cartel, and prompting the judicial inquiry known as Process 8,000. As in Mexico, drug money has been used to corrupt politicians. Colombia's president was alleged to have received upwards of $6 million from the Cali Cartel to fund his political campaign. The scandal strained relations between the United States and Colombia and led the Clinton administration to decertify the country in both 1996 and 1997. Decertification had a negative impact on Colombia's legal exports while also depriving the government of much-needed counter-narcotics funding.[17]

Another major issue plaguing Colombia has been a lack of government legitimacy, compounded by an inability to provide essential services. The capacity of Colombia's justice system to investigate and prosecute homicides declined from 35 percent in the 1970s to "an appallingly low" 6 percent in the late 1990s. During this same period, effective convictions for homicides dropped from 11 to 4 percent.[18] In the year 2000 alone, more than 4,000 Colombians were victims of political homicide,[19] 300 "disappeared," 300,000 were displaced by violence, 1,500 were kidnapped by guerrillas and paramilitaries, and torture was commonplace.[20]

With major sections of the country ostensibly governed by the FARC already, and to demonstrate that the government was serious about ending the conflict through negotiations, the government granted the FARC near complete autonomy to operate in a demili-

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[17] Kline, 2003, p. 173.

[18] Mónica Serrano and María Celia Toro, "From Drug Trafficking to Transnational Organized Crime in Latin America," in Mats Berdal and Mónica Serrano, eds., *Transnational Organized Crime and International Security: Business as Usual?* Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 2002, p. 169.

[19] For more on the various forms of violence in Colombia—particularly political violence—see Andreas E. Feldman and Victor J. Hinojosa, "Terrorism in Colombia: Logic and Sources of a Multidimensional and Ubiquitous Phenomenon," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 21, No. 1, 2009.

[20] Kline, 2003, p. 174.

tarized zone (*zona de despeje*) consisting of five municipalities in the Meta and Caqueta departments.[21] The zone was 16,266 square miles, approximately the size of Switzerland.[22] FARC insurgents used this zone to grow their influence, cultivate illegal narcotics, and establish sophisticated training bases.[23]

What Was Done to Improve the Situation?

In the mid-1990s, elements of the Colombian government recognized that Bogota would need to seriously hamper the drug cartels that operated with seeming impunity if it hoped to make any meaningful gains against the insurgents. This required a deal with the devil; as Monica Serrano and Maria Celia Toro note, "It was after all the alliance established with the Cali cartel that enabled the Colombian government to defeat the Medellin organization in the early 1990s."[24] Once Escobar had been killed and the Medellin Cartel dismantled, the Colombian government purged the national police force and subsequently went full force after the Cali Cartel.[25]

During the administration of Andrés Pastrana (1998–2002), the United Nations (UN) and European Union offered both economic and humanitarian assistance as the government began to craft its conflict resolution strategy. In addition, the United States launched Plan Colombia, a multiyear, multibillion-dollar package designed to bolster counternarcotics and counterterrorism assistance. Between 2000 and 2006, Plan Colombia infused Colombia's coffers with an estimated

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[21] Michael J. LaRosa and Germán R. Mejia, *Colombia: A Concise Contemporary History*, Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2012, p. 92. See also Peter DeShazo, Tanya Primiani, and Phillip McLean, *Back from the Brink: Evaluating Progress in Colombia, 1999–2007*, Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, November 2007, p. 8.

[22] Kline, 2003, p. 173.

[23] The FARC controlled many of the areas where coca was cultivated, including the zones of Guaviare, Caqueta, and Putumayo in the southern and eastern parts of the country.

[24] Serrano and Toro, 2002, p. 174.

[25] For an in-depth examination of the Colombian government's defeat of the Cali Cartel, see Ron Chepesiuk, *The Bullet or the Bribe: Taking Down Colombia's Cali Drug Cartel*, Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2003.

$5.34 billion.[26] During the 1990s, the United States spent billions on law enforcement, interdiction, educational, rehabilitation, and health-related programs as part of this broader effort to deal with the effects of narcotics.[27]

Between 1999 and 2002, the United States gave Colombia $2.04 billion in aid, 81 percent of which was for military purposes, placing Colombia just below Israel and Egypt among the largest recipients of U.S. military assistance.[28] Colombia increased its defense spending from 3.2 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2000 to 4.19 percent in 2005.[29] Overall, the results were extremely positive. Greater spending on infrastructure and social programs helped the Colombian government increase its political legitimacy, while improved security forces were better able to consolidate control over large swaths of the country previously overrun by insurgents and drug cartels.[30]

In 2002, President Bush signed National Security Policy Directive 18, expanding the authority of the U.S. Department of Defense and U.S. State Department to work with the Colombian military as it waged a counterinsurgency (COIN) campaign against the FARC. One of the main pillars of this campaign would be U.S. efforts to work with Joint Task Force Omega (JTF-O). JTF-O's strategy would be to both fight the FARC and offensively attack DTOs and paramilitary forces. Because the insurgents sustained their campaign of violence with funds

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[26] This amount was more than the total aid given in the previous three decades combined. See Alexandra Guáqueta, "The Way Back In: Reintegrating Illegal Armed Groups in Colombia Then and Now," in Mats Berdal and David H. Ucko, *Reintegrating Armed Groups After Conflict: Politics, Violence, and Transition*, London: Routledge, 2009, p. 29.

[27] Angel Rabasa and Peter Chalk, *Colombian Labyrinth: The Synergy of Drugs and Insurgency and Its Implications for Regional Stability*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MR-1339-AF, 2001, p. 19.

[28] Nazih Richani, "Third Parties, War Systems' Inertia, and Conflict Termination: The Doomed Peace Process in Colombia, 1998–2002," *Journal of Conflict Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 2, Winter 2005, p. 86.

[29] Chernick, 2007, p. 76.

[30] James Cockayne and Phil Williams, *The Invisible Tide: Towards an International Strategy to Deal with Drug Trafficking Through West Africa*, New York: International Peace Institute, October 2009.

acquired through the drug trade, going after both the narcotics and the insurgents was within the Colombian military's rules of engagement.

Colombian police counternarcotics capabilities were bolstered by the acquisition of two UH-60 helicopters, 12 UH-1 Huey II helicopters, Ayers S2R-T65 turboprop aircraft, and OV-10 armored spray aircraft, paid for with U.S. funds. Additional funding was used to expand the police antinarcotics commandos, known as *junglas*, from one to four companies. The commandos were trained by U.S. special forces with the mission to destroy cocaine labs throughout the country. These U.S. forces also trained mobile brigades attached to JTF-O. The brigade's mission began in 2004 and continued through 2008 and had a significant impact in the security forces' fight against the FARC. U.S. special forces personnel trained the mobile brigades in small-unit tactics, combat lifesaving, combat engineering, and operational planning, among other tasks. This training effort, combined with the procurement of equipment by the U.S. Military Group, Bogota, helped sustain the combat power of JTF-O units, which were operating under extremely challenging conditions. The improvements were clear: Improved airlift capabilities could bring Colombian COIN forces closer to the area of conflict, an improved logistics and sustainment capability meant that Colombian soldiers could stay in the jungle for longer periods, and improved command and control, communication, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities meant that coordination with other elements of the security forces was easier as well.

The air mobility program was one of the most successful initiatives—if not *the* most successful initiative—of Plan Colombia and the U.S. effort to build the capacity of Colombia's security forces. The United States provided helicopters, training, maintenance, and spare parts to JTF-O. As a result of much improved air mobility, the Colombian military was able to launch operations against FARC bases in Caqueta and Meta. Plan Colombia has been widely hailed as a success, and some analysts believe that, by 2010, Colombian security forces had finally gained the upper hand once and for all.

U.S. assistance also helped improve Colombia's COIN and counterterrorism capabilities tremendously. President Álavaro Uribe, who came to office in 2002 and inaugurated a new counterinsurgency

initiative known as the Democratic Security Strategy, increased the number of professional soldiers to 70,000, created a new category of 20,000 "peasant soldiers," and added another 20,000 police.[31] Overall, Colombia's military force increased from 160,000 in 2000 to 380,000 in 2007.[32] While building the official forces of the state, Uribe pushed for the demobilization of the AUC. In late 2003, the Colombian government launched an aggressive reintegration program for right-wing paramilitaries. The Santa Fe de Ralito I agreement, signed on July 15, marked the beginning of formal negotiations between the Colombian government and the AUC paramilitaries. The terms of the accord stipulated that all combatants must demobilize by the end of 2005 and that the organizations' leaders and troops would be concentrated in a specific location to be determined. Furthermore, all paramilitary drug trafficking was to be suspended, and a unilateral cease-fire went into effect immediately. Santa Fe de Ralito I was signed by 22 of 26 AUC blocs (roughly 85 percent).[33]

Seeking to consolidate gains from the agreement, the government and paramilitaries signed Santa Fe de Ralito II on May 13, 2004. This follow-on agreement was a gesture of goodwill on the part of the Uribe government. It established a 368-km² *zona de ubicacion*, or concentration zone, in Tierralta, Cordoba.[34] Any AUC member who relocated to this safe area would have his arrest warrant suspended in an effort to expedite the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) process.[35] Though Mexico will not benefit from a DDR process, find-

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[31] Chernick, 2007, p. 76.

[32] Richani, 2010, p. 34.

[33] The blocs that chose to eschew signing the agreement were the Bloque Central Bolivar, the Bloque Elmer Cardenas, and the Eastern Alliance (Guáqueta, 2009, p. 21).

[34] Kimberly Theidon, "Transitional Subjects: The Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration of Former Combatants in Colombia," *International Journal of Transitional Justice*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2007, p. 73.

[35] To be sure, the suspension of an arrest warrant or some similar form of amnesty was a highly controversial policy for those who suffered at the hands of the paramilitaries. The AUC was, by far, responsible for the majority of human rights violations in Colombia during the time these groups operated. See Julia E. Sweig, "What Kind of War for Colombia?" *Foreign Affairs*, September–October 2002.

ing ways to reintegrate former VDTO members into society, should they seek such opportunities, will present an entirely new suite of challenges for any future administration.

Beginning in November 2003 and culminating in August 2006, more than 31,000 paramilitary troops associated with the AUC were demobilized, and 17,000 weapons were surrendered.[36] Santa Fe de Ralito II was responsible for establishing the Mission to Support the Peace Process of the Organization of American States, which headed the disarmament and demobilization verification process. The process was administered by state institutions and closely monitored and evaluated. Disarmament and demobilization were overseen by the Colombian Ministry of Defense; the Ministry of Interior and Justice was initially tasked with handling reintegration, only to be supplanted in 2006 by a special presidential high commissioner for reintegration post.

Efforts to build the capacity of Colombia's security forces were complemented by anti-corruption initiatives aimed at preventing widespread collusion and clientelism, the penetration of organized crime into government, low state reach in poor and rural areas, and an inefficient judiciary and criminal justice system. The Colombian government worked to reform the executive branch, implemented fiscal reforms, and redistributed royalties from land and mineral development nationwide instead of only to producing regions.[37] Under Plan Colombia, nearly $90 million was dedicated to programs aimed at strengthening Colombia's human rights record and judicial institutions, with initiatives that sought the protection of human rights nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), supported human rights NGOs' information and education programs, created and trained special units of prosecutors and judicial police to investigate human rights cases, and trained Colombian public defenders and judges.[38] Many of these

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[36] Jorge A. Restrepo and Robert Muggah, "Colombia's Quiet Demobilization: A Security Dividend?" in Robert Muggah, ed., *Security and Post-Conflict Reconstruction: Dealing with Fighters in the Aftermath of War*, London: Routledge, 2009, p. 36.

[37] June S. Beittel, *Colombia: Background, U.S. Relations, and Congressional Interest*, Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, November 28, 2012, p. 7.

[38] U.S. Department of State, "Plan Colombia," fact sheet, March 28, 2000.

initiatives have been successful; governance and institutional reforms are still a work in progress.

How Did It End Up?

Under Uribe, the situation in Colombia improved dramatically. Between 2002 and 2005, the economy grew at an annual rate of 4.4–5 percent.[39] With a reinforced military and reinvigorated police force, kidnappings dropped to their lowest rate in decades and the number of murders was reduced half, from 32,000 per year at its peak.[40]

A key element of Plan Colombia was to strengthen the country's institutions so that gains made against the FARC and overall progress in security would be sustained through government stability. Once Colombian security forces were able to recapture territory from the insurgents and drug traffickers, there was an immediate move to stand up institutions in these areas. This was part of the "build," in clear, hold, and build, and it allowed the Colombian state to extend its writ farther afield from the ministries in Bogota to the rural hinterlands. President Uribe's Democratic Security Strategy was implemented so effectively in part because the progress brought about by judicial, anti-corruption, and security force reforms.[41]

JTF-O was the centerpiece of a sustained offensive against FARC positions around Bogota, as well as in Florencia and La Macarena. Throughout southeastern Colombia, the government regained control of territory and began planning to consolidate the area through a combination of security and development. Once Colombian control was extended to these areas, it facilitated the demobilization of paramilitaries as well. In 2002, there were 1,645 acts of terrorism reported by the Colombian government; in 2010, there was a 71 percent reduction, with 480 reported acts of terrorism.[42]

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[39] Jerrold M. Post, *The Mind of the Terrorist: The Psychology of Terrorism from the IRA to al-Qaeda*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, p. 157.

[40] Post, 2007, p. 157.

[41] Spencer et al., 2011, p.ix.

[42] Spencer et al., 2011, p. 67.

By 2010, there had been significant progress in Colombia, though many challenges remained. Colombia is still a major source country for illicit narcotics. Moreover, the state continues to share sovereignty with a range of violent nonstate actors, including rebel groups and right-wing paramilitaries allied with drug traffickers and wealthy landowners.[43] Finally, many observers argue that, over the past several years, the FARC (or some of its fronts) has been undergoing a mutation from an ideologically driven insurgent group to an inchoate criminal organization fueled by profits.[44] Stamping out the criminal offshoot of the FARC may prove even more difficult for the Colombian government than mollifying the ideologically motivated core group of guerrillas.

Colombian COIN forces have significantly degraded the FARC's command and control. Some FARC fronts have gained more autonomy and operate in remote parts of the country, away from the watchful eyes of the group's leadership. One result has been an increase in drug trafficking among some fronts, though it tends to be limited to a younger generation of less ideologically driven members who are motivated by profit.

Similarities and Differences Between Colombia and Mexico

As noted earlier, while Colombia is the most frequent comparison case offered for Mexico (there are several ways in which Mexico and Colombia are apt analogs, including income inequality and uneven wealth distribution, porous borders, and the nature and scope of drug-related violence), there are many significant differences between the two countries. Then–Secretary of State Hillary Clinton caused a minor

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[43] Richani, 2010, p. 35.

[44] See Vera Eccarius-Kelly, "Surreptitious Lifelines: A Structural Analysis of the FARC and the PKK," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 24, No. 2, 2012, p. 250. One of the most comprehensive analyses of how the FARC's motivation has been affected by the group's involvement in the drug trade can be found in James J. Brittain, *Revolutionary Social Change in Colombia: The Origin and Direction of the FARC-EP*, New York: Pluto Press, 2010, pp. 89–114.

kerfuffle in September 2010 when she described the drug violence in Mexico as an "insurgency" and was quoted on the record saying, "It's looking more and more like Colombia looked 20 years ago, when the narcotraffickers controlled certain parts of the country."[45] While much was made of this comment at the time, and perhaps rightfully so, many scholars assert that "the Colombia analogy is of limited utility when assessing the situation in Mexico" and that "facile analogies with Colombia" actually do more harm than good.[46] Differences between Colombia and Mexico are many and include the role of ideology in the conflict, the geographic reach of the violence, international connections, and the violence initiated by right-wing paramilitaries.

Violence

In the early 1990s, the homicide rate in Colombia stood at 77.5 per 100,000 inhabitants, the highest in the world at the time. This rate was three times higher than that of the Brazil, the country with the next highest homicide rate, at 24.6 per 100,000, and nine times that of the United States, at eight per 100,000.[47] Much of the violence was directly related to control of the narcotics trade. The system of violence was perpetuated when Colombia's two most powerful cartels, Medellin and Cali, were smashed in the 1990s, though they were never fully eradicated. The result was the formation of smaller chain networks of loosely connected organizations, sometimes referred to as *cartelitos*, which coordinated transactions on an ad hoc basis.[48] The right-wing paramilitaries organized under the banner of the AUC, which also

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[45] Adam Entous and Nathan Hodge, "U.S. Sees Heightened Threat in Mexico," *Wall Street Journal*, September 10, 2010.

[46] Paul Rexton Kan and Phil Williams, "Afterword: Criminal Violence in Mexico—A Dissenting Analysis," *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 21, No. 1, March 2010, pp. 218–219.

[47] Kline, 2003, p. 171.

[48] Michael Kenney, *From Pablo to Osama: Trafficking and Terrorist Networks, Government Bureaucracies, and Competitive Adaptation*, University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007, p. 125. This point is also emphasized in Garry Leech, *The FARC: The Longest Insurgency*, London: Zed Books, 2011, p. 59. Referring to this phenomenon, Bunker and Sullivan note, "under duress, network organizational forms will devolve into smaller and smaller clusters and nodes as a defensive measure" (Robert J. Bunker and John P.

helped fuel the conflict. The drug trade brought vast amounts of money brought into the country, allowing traffickers, insurgents, and thugs to finance their activities with little fear of prosecution from a weakened Colombian state. While no right-wing paramilitaries have emerged in Mexico to date, it is not entirely outside the realm of possibility that this could become a future danger, as has been the case in many other Central and South American nations embroiled in conflict.

Part of the surge in Mexican drug trafficking is related to the success of efforts in Colombia. For example, the relative success of U.S.-Colombian efforts to destroy the Medellin and Cali cartels have allowed Mexican cartels to muscle in on trafficking routes and distribution networks.[49] In Mexico, much of the violence is contained—it flares primarily in three cities and three or four states—but the violence often shifts, making it unpredictable and destabilizing.[50] As for Colombia, a U.S. State Department report from 1998 concluded that guerrillas maintained "a significant degree of influence" in 57 percent of Colombia's municipalities.[51] To be sure, the geographic scope of violent nonstate actors has been significantly reduced over the past decade, mainly due to the success of Colombia's COIN strategy.

Indiscriminate Mayhem or "Anomic Violence"

In Colombia, the conflict became intertwined with the international narcotics trade, while in Mexico much of the violence and indiscriminate mayhem is a *result* of the international narcotics trade. Furthermore, unlike in Mexico, the two largest sources of revenue in Colombia were kidnapping and cattle theft, accounting for approximately

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Sullivan, "Cartel Evolution Revisited: Third Phase Cartel Potentials and Alternative Futures in Mexico," *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 21, No. 1, March 2010, p. 48).

[49] Richard L. Millett, "Weak States and Porous Borders: Smuggling Along the Andean Ridge," in Kimberley L. Thachuk, ed., *Transnational Threats: Smuggling and Trafficking in Arms, Drugs, and Human Life*, Westport, Conn.: Praeger Security International, 2007, p. 169.

[50] Kan and Williams, 2010, p. 230.

[51] Kline, 2003, p. 173.

$40 million and $24 million per year, respectively.[52] The range of nonstate actors in Colombia included VDTOs, insurgent groups, and paramilitaries.

In response to the FARC and ELN insurgencies, a collection of local right-wing militias combined to form the AUC, initially intended as a bulwark against the insurgents. However, over time, the AUC became just another belligerent in the conflict, well known for its involvement in drug trafficking and for widespread human rights abuses. Groups that backed the AUC, including landowners, cattle ranchers, and certain politicians, looked the other way while AUC fighters committed brutal atrocities. The AUC's ranks swelled exponentially, from 6,000 fighters in 1999 to 13,500 in 2003 and to nearly 40,000 at the time of demobilization.[53] While it was still active, the group used proceeds garnered from the drug trade to equip its fighters with AR-15 assault rifles, M60 machine guns, and a large arsenal of ammunition.[54]

Traditional Threat/Insurgency

There are significant differences in the role of ideology in the conflicts. In Mexico, "the Mexican state is not challenged by competing ideological insurgencies and paramilitary forces."[55] However, in Colombia, the violence initially grew out of a rural, class-based ideological peasant insurgency that challenged the established political order.[56] In turn, ideology affected the way the respective actors behaved toward the local population.[57] The FARC was a Cold War throwback, initially created as the Moscow-line Communist Party of Colombia whose primary objective was to seize power through a Vietnamese-style strategy

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[52] Chernick, 2007, p. 71.

[53] Guáqueta, 2009, p. 26.

[54] Michael Spagat, "Colombia's Paramilitary DDR: Quiet and Tentative Success," Bogota, Colombia: Centro de Recursos para el Análisis de Conflictos [Conflict Analysis Resource Center], August 2006, p. 2.

[55] Kan and Williams, 2010, p. 220.

[56] Chernick, 2007, p. 53.

[57] Kan and Williams, 2010, p. 221.

of people's war. The ELN, on the other hand, comprised university students and other intelligentsia. This group leaned toward Havana and, like as in Cuban, its ideology was influenced by Catholic liberation theology.

The FARC collaborated with other insurgent groups, including the Basque separatist group ETA and the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA). After the Colombian government forced the insurgents to switch from mobile warfare back to guerrilla tactics, the FARC sought the expertise of more than two dozen PIRA training teams.[58] PIRA trainers worked with the FARC on building more effective mortars, operating in urban terrain, and constructing improvised explosive devices.[59] In response to pressure from Colombian government forces, some FARC units moved across the border to a sanctuary in neighboring Venezuela.

Ethnically Motivated Violence

Like Mexico, Colombia has a variety of ethnic groups, including a minority of indigenous peoples. However, in both countries, the violence has not been motivated by ethnic conflict. Rather, as described earlier, violence in Colombia has been the result of ideology and a control over resources; in Mexico, the violence stems primarily from the latter, not the former.

Lack of Economic Opportunities

In Colombia, the challenges were less about a lack of economic opportunities and more about income inequality. Contributing to the dearth of government legitimacy is a massive gap between rural and urban, rich and poor. Colombia's Gini coefficient (an income inequality measure) was 58.5 in 2011, the highest in Latin America (not including

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[58] Thomas A. Marks, "A Model Counterinsurgency: Uribe's Colombia (2002–2006) vs. FARC," *Military Review*, March–April 2007, p. 52.

[59] Kim Cragin, Peter Chalk, Sara A. Daly, and Brian A. Jackson, *Sharing the Dragon's Teeth: Terrorist Groups and the Exchange of New Technologies*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MG-485-DHS, 2007, pp. 83–86.

Haiti) and the eighth highest in the world. Mexico's Gini coefficient of 48.3 in 2008 was the 25th highest out of 136 countries.[60]

In Colombia's rural areas, the poverty rate is around 80 percent, with 42 percent of this subpopulation living in "extreme poverty."[61] In many of these areas, the FARC serves as the only source of opportunity and employment for young people.[62] Over the years, the FARC has established a shadow state in the areas it controls. Just a few of the services provided by the insurgents include education, medicine, physical infrastructure, protection, the administration of justice, and even civil ceremonies, such as marriage and divorce.[63] Still, it should be noted that that improvement in economic opportunities generally has to be preceded by a reduction in the level of violence and the establishment of state authority. Without such gains in security and stability, economic development will not progress unimpeded.

Weapon Availability

Small-arms trafficking in Colombia has posed a major threat to the stability of the government for much of the past two decades. Indeed, three geopolitical characteristics, including post–Cold War arms stockpiles, demilitarized zones during the late 1990s and early 2000s, and state interference, have all contributed to the influx of arms into the country.[64] Although Mexico is also plagued by a widespread availability of weapons, it has not suffered the effects of a demilitarized zone, nor did Cold War powers dump arms into the country to support an ideological ally, as Cuba did throughout much of Latin America.

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[60] Central Intelligence Agency, "Country Comparison: Distribution of Family Income— Gini Index," *World Factbook*, Washington, D.C., data as of December 2012.

[61] Richani, 2010, p. 41.

[62] Chernick, 2007, p. 58. For more on FARC's recruiting strategies, see Roman D. Ortiz, "Insurgent Strategies in the Post–Cold War: The Case of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 25, No. 2, April 2002.

[63] Chernick, 2007, p. 55.

[64] Cragin and Hoffman, 2003, pp. 10–11.

Competition over a Resource

To be sure, drug trafficking is a major driver of violence in both Colombia and Mexico. In Colombia, competition between cartels in Bogota, Cali, and Medellin over the production, shipment, and financing components of the drug trade led to an increase in car bombings, kidnappings, and assassinations.[65] However, Colombia is known as a source country, while Mexico is more of a transit country (though, as mentioned elsewhere in this report and companion volume, Mexico has experienced an uptick in domestic drug production over the past decade). In short, competition over control of the narcotics trade is the most obvious similarity between the two countries. As a result, it is the example most frequently cited when analysts propose that Mexico is very much like Colombia. Yet, we argue that competition over a resource is just one of many elements contributing to the levels of violence in both Mexico and Colombia.

Ungoverned Spaces

In late 1998, Colombian President Andrés Pastrana agreed to the demilitarization of five FARC-controlled municipalities in south-central Colombia. The result was a demilitarized zone that was supposed to incentive the FARC insurgents to begin negotiations with the government.[66] While the 600-mile-long border separating Guatemala and Mexico suffers from a lack of state presence, it is not and never has been an official demilitarized zone. Like Colombia, ungoverned spaces in Mexico are characterized by poverty, violence, and corruption, often succumbing to the control of gangs, criminal groups, and vigilantes.[67]

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[65] LaRosa and Mejia, 2012, pp. 90–91.

[66] Nina M. Serafino, *Colombia: Conditions and U.S. Policy Options*, Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, February 12, 2011, p. 10.

[67] Angel Rabasa, Steven Boraz, Peter Chalk, Kim Cragin, Theodore W. Karasik, Jennifer D. P. Moroney, Kevin A. O'Brien, and John E. Peters, *Ungoverned Territories: Understanding and Reducing Terrorism Risks*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MG-561-AF, 2007, p. 277.

State/Institutional Weakness

Like Mexico, Colombia has struggled to adequately police its borders. Accordingly, Colombia's porous borders facilitate the smuggling and trafficking of narcotics, arms, people, cigarettes, and automobiles. Four of the six principal "corridors" of drug trafficking in Latin America emanate from Colombia and include a Colombia-Caribbean-Mexico route, a Colombia–eastern Pacific–Mexico route, a Colombia-Venezuela-Atlantic-Europe route, and a Colombia–Venezuela–Atlantic–West Africa–Europe route.[68] Moreover, like Mexico, Colombia continues to suffer from weak rule of law, corruption, and bureaucratic malaise. As violence peaked in Colombia, spending on social benefits declined, with investments in education, health, housing, and social security dropping from 41 percent to 34 percent.[69]

Patronage/Corruption

Colombia has long suffered the maladies associated with corruption in its government, security forces, and intelligence agencies. Corruption has a corrosive effect on the legitimacy of the state because it undermines the authority of the government, the police, the military, and the intelligence agencies. "[T]his lack of trust hampers the government's ability to gain the cooperation of citizens and obtain intelligence from diverse sources," say Jennifer Holmes and colleagues.[70] Mexico, too, is plagued by rampant corruption, which similarly erodes the public's trust in national institutions.

Lessons for Mexico

The title of our study is *Mexico Is Not Colombia*. As detailed here and in the companion volume, Colombia is not necessarily the best—and

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[68] Peter Chalk, *The Latin American Drug Trade: Scope, Dimensions, Impact, and Response*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MG-1076-AF, 2011, p. 65.

[69] Kline, 2003, p. 177.

[70] Holmes, Gutiérrez de Piñeres, and Curtin, 2008, pp. 150–151.

it is certainly not the only—comparison case from which to learn.[71] Perhaps the most important takeaway for Mexico is convincing Mexico City to become more comfortable with the idea of external assistance. According to Robert Haddick, "Plan Colombia was a success partly because of the long-term presence of U.S. Special Forces advisers, intelligence experts, and other military specialists inside Colombia, a presence which would not please most Mexicans. And Colombia's long counterattack against its insurgents resulted in actions that boiled the blood of many human rights observers."[72]

Just before the inauguration of President Uribe, U.S. government policy changed to allow the United States to help Colombia combat both drug trafficking and terrorism. Because the significant aid and infrastructure for combating drug trafficking was fungible, a portion of it was quickly redirected to support counterterrorism operations to align U.S. and Colombian interests. This allowed the two governments to successfully work hand-in-hand to produce the spectacular results that characterized the last two years of Uribe's presidency. Still, it is worth noting that progress against violence and improvements in governance did not happen overnight. Reforms took place over a long period and were adequately funded by the United States.

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[71] See Christopher Paul, Colin P. Clarke, and Chad C. Serena, *Mexico Is Not Colombia: Alternative Historical Analogies for Responding to the Challenge of Violent Drug-Trafficking Organizations*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-548/1, 2014.

[72] Robert Haddick, "This Week at War: If Mexico Is at War, Does America Have to Win It?" *Foreign Policy*, September 10, 2010.

Peru (1980–1992)

Case Selection Categories: Resource Insurgency, Ungoverned Spaces, High Level of Organized Crime

The Peruvian government was engaged in a large and notoriously bloody COIN campaign from 1980 until the early 1990s—one that did not officially end until the 1992 arrest and incarceration of Abimael Guzmán, the leader of Peru's largest and most violent insurgent group, Sendero Luminoso, or Shining Path. Although Peru's internal unrest did not entirely terminate with Guzmán's arrest, it calmed appreciably as many Sendero insurgents either faded away or formed smaller splinter groups with far less capability and decidedly less revolutionary zeal. While remnants of Sendero still exist today (led by Comrade Artemio) and the organization continues to "carry out small scale attacks against police often in response to coca eradication and other anti-narcotics operations,"[1] it has been reduced to a mostly fringe criminal organization that dabbles in occasional acts of terrorism.[2]

The Peruvian conflict is notable for a number of reasons, the first two of which are reflected in the Mexico case most acutely. First, it resulted in nearly 70,000 deaths,[3] mostly among unarmed civilian

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[1] Thomas Mockaitis, *Resolving Insurgencies*, Carlisle, Pa.: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2011, p. 43.

[2] See Kathryn Gregory, *Shining Path, Tupac Amaru (Peru, Leftists)*, New York: Council on Foreign Relations, August 27, 2009.

[3] Frank Hyland, "Peru's Sendero Luminoso: From Maoism to Narco-Terrorism," *Terrorism Monitor*, Vol. 6, No. 23, December 8, 2008, p. 1.

peasants, and many were the result of callous acts of savagery.[4] Second, truly sadistic Sendero forces and the brutally indiscriminate Peruvian military and police were responsible for the unspeakable atrocities. It was a "dirty war," and all sides in the conflict participated in gross human rights violations.[5] Third, it was a conflict fueled by drug money—significant amounts of drug money. During this period, Peru was the world's largest supplier of coca leaf and coca paste.[6] Although this fact is significant in its own right, it was of principal importance during the insurgency because, at that time, Peru's formal economy was practically moribund. Finally, and this is likely a product of the previous three characteristics, the conflict infected nearly the whole of Peru, and it became difficult to determine who was on the right and wrong sides of the war. Disaggregating the purveyors of violence at certain points in the conflict was an Augean task: The military fought the insurgents, slaughtered peasants, and was in conflict with the police; the coca traffickers fought the farmers, the insurgents, and the armed forces but were content to work with whomever was in charge at the time; and Sendero fought everyone, including its fellow revolutionaries on Peru's political left.

The conflict ended with a "win" for the Peruvian government. But the means of achieving victory were controversial at best. The strategy and tactics employed by the Peruvian government were fundamentally inhumane if not outright criminal. Nonetheless, they were ultimately effective, at least in terms of dismantling the insurgency and returning Peru to some, however distorted, semblance of normalcy. While the means employed by the Peruvian government to fight Sendero should not be exported to Mexico, many of the lessons borne of this case should be heeded.

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[4]   See Cynthia McClintock, *Revolutionary Movements in Latin America: El Salvador's FMLN and Peru's Shining Path*, Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 1998, p. 68.

[5]   See Richard Clutterbuck, "Peru: Cocaine, Terrorism and Corruption," *International Relations*, Vol. 12, No. 5, 1995, pp. 87–88.

[6]   Vanda Felbab-Brown, *Shooting Up: Counterinsurgency and the War on Drugs*, Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2010, p. 35.

Conflict and Violence in Peru

In 1980, Peru had just returned to civilian rule after 12 years of military government.[7] Not only were Peru's politics unstable during this period, but its economy was also experiencing significant turbulence, much like Mexico's in the 1970s. Beginning in 1980 and continuing throughout the decade, Peru's economic output contracted at an average annual rate of 0.4 percent.[8] Average urban wages plummeted by 35 percent in the first two years of the decade and dropped another 50 percent between 1985 and 1990.[9] And in 1981, nearly one-third of the population of Peru's capital, Lima, lived in "self-governing squatter and shantytown communities."[10] The standard of living in Peru also fell precipitously during this period. By 1988, inflation had soared to around 1,700 percent and reached 2,700 percent the following year.[11] Millions of rural Peruvians lived close to the subsistence level, few could find jobs, and many were engaged in Peru's informal economy.[12] It was also during this period that many of Peru's poorly paid public employees became involved in "graft, corruption and even violent crimes."[13]

In addition to rather significant political and economic changes in the early 1980s, Peru saw the emergence of several leftist revolutionary groups—notably, the Túpac Amaru Revolutionary Movement, or MRTA, and the Shining Path, or Sendero Luminoso. Although both

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[7] David Scott Palmer, "Rebellion in Rural Peru: The Origins and Evolution of Sendero Luminoso," *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 18, No. 2, January 1986, pp. 128–129.

[8] Cyrus Ernesto Zirakzadeh, "From Revolutionary Dreams to Organizational Fragmentation: Disputes over Violence Within Sendero Luminoso," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 14, No. 4, Winter 2002, p. 71.

[9] Zirakzadeh, 2002, p. 71.

[10] Zirakzadeh, 2002, p. 70.

[11] Zirakzadeh, 2002, p. 71.

[12] Clutterbuck, 1995, p. 89. Peru has historically had a large informal economy. Even by the mid-1990s, up to 50 percent of "the economically active population" was involved in the informal economy, and this activity accounted for as much as 40 percent of Peru's GDP. See Roy Godson and William J. Olson, "International Organized Crime," *Society*, Vol. 32, No. 2, January–February 1995, p. 20.

[13] Zirakzadeh, 2002, p. 71.

groups caused significant disorder, MRTA was the smaller of the two, more conventional in its operations, and largely restricted its violence to governmental or symbolic targets.[14] MRTA accounted for approximately 9 percent of the violence in Peru between 1984 and the early 1990s, reaching its zenith of 16 percent in 1987, and it was credited with 257 deaths between mid-1984 and 1991.[15] MRTA engaged in bombings, armed assaults, assassinations, and kidnappings and targeted Peru's security forces, domestic businesses, and press, as well as international businesses and banking interests.[16] While dangerous, MRTA's operations and activities were dwarfed in scope, intensity, and savagery by those of Sendero Luminoso.

Sendero Luminoso was formed in the late 1960s but did not emerge as a violent insurgent group until 1980. Initially, Sendero limited its operations to symbolic attacks, such as burning ballot boxes and hanging dogs from lampposts.[17] In 1981, it expanded its activities to include the bombing of public buildings and private enterprises.[18] But in 1982, Sendero became much more violent. It began a wave of attacks and assassinations of local public figures and orchestrated a jailbreak from the Ayacucho department prison.[19] By 1983, Peru's government was forced to respond to Sendero: It declared a state of emergency in Ayacucho and further authorized Peru's armed forces to take administrative control of the area. These actions led to a long period of almost indescribable violence—perpetrated by all sides in the conflict—that

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[14] See Peter A. Topp, *The United States Counter Drug Strategy for Peru*, Carlisle, Pa.: U.S. Army War College, April 1992, p. 6; Cynthia McClintock, "The War on Drugs: The Peruvian Case," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, Vol. 30, Nos. 2–3, Summer–Fall 1988, p. 138; and Gordon H. McCormick, *Sharp Dressed Men: Peru's Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, R-4276-USDP, 1993, p. 25.

[15] McCormick, 1993, pp. 22–23.

[16] McCormick, 1993, pp. 22–23.

[17] Palmer, 1986, p. 129.

[18] Palmer, 1986, p. 129.

[19] Palmer, 1986, p. 129.

did not end until the 1992 capture of Sendero's founder and leader, Abimael Guzmán.[20]

Peru's Informal Economy and the Coca Industry

At the height of Peru's conflict, its informal economy was bustling and its coca industry was expanding rapidly. In the mid-1980s, as much as two-thirds of Lima's workforce was involved in the informal economy, chiefly in transportation services, clothing manufacture, and housing construction.[21] And while a portion of Peru's population had always been involved with coca farming,[22] the industry exploded after the onset of conflict.[23] In 1988, it was estimated that upwards of 300,000 peasant families were involved in growing coca leaves.[24] For many, coca growing became a primary if not sole source of income.[25] By the early-1990s, Peru's economy depended "heavily on drug monies to keep it afloat."[26] Peru's coca industry pumped anywhere from $4 million to $18 million into the economy daily and generated up to $2 billion—equivalent to roughly 30 percent of legal exports—per year.[27]

The growth of the coca industry had significant and prolonged effects on the conflict in Peru. First, it effected a wholesale change in the Peruvian economy. The coca industry eventually employed roughly

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[20] It should be noted that Sendero Luminoso and at least one offshoot still exist, but their combined membership is much smaller and only on occasion engages in violent operations.

[21] Palmer, 1986, pp. 130–131.

[22] There has always been a legal traditional market for coca in Peru, though the price for coca paste on the illicit drug market is much higher. See Felbab-Brown, 2010, p. 39.

[23] Svante E. Cornell, "The Interaction of Narcotics and Conflict," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 42, No. 6, November 2005b, p. 755. Peru became the source of up to 60 percent of the world's coca leaf Topp, 1992, p. 2.

[24] See McClintock, 1988, p. 128.

[25] See David Scott Palmer, "Peru, The Drug Business and Shining Path: Between Scylla and Charybdis?" *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, Vol. 34, No. 3, Fall 1992, p. 68.

[26] Topp, 1992, p. 4.

[27] Topp, 1992, pp. 4–5.

15 percent of Peru's national workforce in a range of jobs, including transportation, sales of herbicides and chemicals, accounting, and legal practices.[28] Furthermore, careers in the coca industry became somewhat socially acceptable.[29] If they were not already involved in the coca industry, many farmers and others working in the informal economy quickly gravitated toward this highly profitable enterprise.[30] As it grew, the coca industry leeched labor from other productive industries and crops, led to the destruction of land, and increased inflationary pressure on an already weakened Peruvian economy.[31] Second, it prompted increased U.S. involvement in Peruvian affairs, which resulted in the adoption of rather draconian COIN tactics and, depending on one's point of view, counterproductive coca eradication policies.[32] Third, it provided substantial amounts of money to Sendero's fighters, who, at that time, were ensconced in the Upper Huallaga Valley—the hub of Peruvian coca farming—and acted as brokers between coca growers and international traffickers.[33] Fourth, it prompted the formation of deepening ties between Colombian coca traffickers and Sendero. Although purely a marriage of convenience, this relationship was important: The traffickers indirectly supported Sendero's cause by pro-

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[28] Topp, 1992, pp. 3–4. Although the development is outside the time frame of this study, we note that the coca production industry in Peru generated an estimated $304 million in 2004. See Rob Hanser and Nathan Moran, "Illegal Drugs, Trade, and Trafficking," in Frank G. Shanty and Patit Paban Mishra, eds., *Organized Crime: From Trafficking to Terrorism*, Vol. 1, Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, 2008, p. 319.

[29] See Menno Vellinga, "Some Observations on Changing Business Practices in Drug Trafficking: The Andean Experience," *Global Crime*, Vol. 6, Nos. 3–4, November 2004, p. 381.

[30] Coca leaf growers, or *cocaleros*, in the Upper Huallaga Valley could expect to earn three and a half times Peru's per capita income annually. See Felbab-Brown, 2010, p. 38. According to a 1988 survey in Peru, coca was far more valuable than other crops, such as cacao or corn. See Palmer, 1992, p. 68.

[31] See Godson and Olson, 1995, p. 25.

[32] Many of these efforts were perceived as cosmetic and had little effect other than alienating the coca growers and pushing them further into the arms of Sendero. See Max G. Manwaring, *Shadows of Things Past and Images of the Future: Lessons for the Insurgencies in our Midst*, Carlisle, Pa.: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2004, p. 22.

[33] Sendero profits in the Upper Huallaga Valley alone ranged from $10 million to $100 million annually. See Palmer, 1992, p. 70.

viding it with a large and steady stream of income and by acting as a source for more advanced weaponry, including mortars and heavy machine guns. Finally, the amount of money generated by the industry further tainted an already corrupt Peruvian security establishment as its members sought their share of the coca profits. This relationship was easy to justify, as "senior officers had adopted a policy of condoning the production and export of coca paste in order to secure the cooperation of the campesinos in defeating the [Sendero Luminoso] terrorists."[34]

All sides in the conflict benefited in some way from the rise of the coca trade. Growers, combatants, government officials, and ancillary service providers all saw rising incomes.[35] The growth of the coca industry also had the effect of expanding the informal economy and thus took some pressure off the government for failing to improve Peru's licit formal economy. The significant downside, of course, was that Peru's macroeconomy was being destabilized, local economies were being destroyed, and thousands of Peruvians were being killed in the process. The coca industry, like the illicit drug trade in other conflicts, not only provided the funds to perpetuate the conflict, but it also provided an additional rationale for doing so. This was particularly pernicious in Peru, where both insurgents and counterinsurgents were already impassioned and had a deeply ingrained flair for violent behavior.

Sendero Luminoso

Sendero Luminoso was founded in the late 1960s by Abimael Guzmán,[36] who was a university philosophy professor prior to his career as a revolutionary leader. Sendero started out as a very small organization, relying for years on several hundred committed activists who, until 1980,

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[34] Clutterbuck, 1995, p. 90.

[35] See, for instance, the discussion of profit making in John Simpson, *In the Forests of the Night: Encounters in Peru with Terrorism, Drug-Running and Military Oppression*, London: Random House, 1993, p. 132.

[36] Guzmán was not just Sendero's founder; he was its leader—its only leader. Sendero Luminoso was truly centered on the philosophy and direction of Guzmán and no one else. See McClintock, 1998, p. 63.

engaged in mostly nonviolent activism and the development of grass-roots support for the movement.[37] This small, dedicated core spent the 1970s planning its revolution, developing relationships with Peru's ethnic communities, and advocating for self-governing communes.[38] The organization did not engage in violent or wide-scale criminal activities until early 1980, when Sendero began staging attacks in and around Peru's capital and other urban areas.[39]

It was also not until the 1980s that Sendero truly began to expand beyond its core cadre. This largely comported with its conception of how it wanted to conduct its revolution: Sendero did not begin to take armed action until Guzmán and his subordinate leaders felt that the organization had sufficient support from the Peruvian population. While Sendero continued to grow throughout the 1980s, its size likely peaked in the early 1990s, when it counted up to 10,000 full-time fighters and had anywhere from 50,000 to 100,000 supporters scattered throughout Peru's countryside and, to a lesser degree, its urban areas. But regardless of how large Sendero became as an organization and as a movement, it still maintained only a small core cadre of leaders. This was by design: Since its formation, Sendero was significantly more interested in the quality and fervor of its personnel than it ever was in sheer numbers.[40]

Sendero was structured like many other similarly ideological Leninist-Maoist organizations and had similar phase-oriented plans

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[37] James Ron, "Ideology in Context: Explaining Sendero Luminoso's Tactical Escalation," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 28, No. 5, 2001, p. 569.

[38] See Zirakzadeh, 2002, p. 78.

[39] William Yaworsky, "Target Analysis of Shining Path Insurgents in Peru: An Example of US Army Psychological Operations," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 4, August 2009, p. 652.

[40] See Max G. Manwaring, "Peru's Sendero Luminoso: The Shining Path Beckons," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 541, September 1995, p. 160. See also Timothy P. Wickham-Crowley, *Guerrillas and Revolution in Latin America: A Comparative Study of Insurgents and Regimes Since 1956*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992, p. 297. Sendero's relationships with other organizations were tenuous if not outright confrontational. See, for instance, Daniel W. Fitz-Simons, "Sendero Luminoso: Case Study in Insurgency," *Parameters*, Vol. 22, Summer 1993, p. 68.

for its prosecution of revolutionary warfare.[41] Its leadership was full of "intellectuals" who contemplated the best ways to conduct the revolution and, later, on how to most effectively employ violence. Structurally, there was a distinct hierarchy, with Guzmán at the top. But its operations were decentralized, for the most part.[42] Orders and operational guidance were transmitted orally to maintain secrecy within and outside the organization.[43]

Sendero's operations reflected its structure: Fighters were divided along national, regional, and local lines. Sendero operated in six regions, each of which was further broken down into zones, sectors, and cells.[44] The regional zones acted as the locus of both decisionmaking and operations. Each region or subregion was led by a party committee, or *cuadro*, which consisted of members dedicated to the discrete planning and conduct of operations in the areas under their control. Leadership positions included a political commissar and members in charge of control, defense, and movement; supply and logistics; communal matters, justice, crop production, marriage, and burials; and the enhancement of the organization and information dissemination.[45] Sendero's operational elements were organized into columns that varied in size, depending on the degree of control or presence that Sendero had in a particular region. Where Sendero did not have control of an area, its columns were small and numbered between ten and 15 members. Where it did have control, its columns were much larger and numbered between 60 and 120.[46] These Sendero fighters armed themselves

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[41] See Manwaring, 2004, p. 19. Sendero had a five-phase plan for its revolution much like that advocated by Mao Tse Tung. See William Rosenau, "Is the Shining Path the 'New Khmer Rouge'?" *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 17, No. 4, 1994, p. 312.

[42] See Chris Dishman, "The Leaderless Nexus: When Crime and Terror Converge," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 28, No. 3, 2005, p. 240.

[43] Nikolaus Guran, *Insurgency in Peru, Retrospective Analysis of the Sendero Luminoso's (Shining Path)*, thesis, Quantico, Va.: U.S. Marine Corps Command and Staff College, April 2008, p. 8.

[44] Guran, 2008, p. 8.

[45] See Manwaring, 1995, p. 159.

[46] Fitz-Simons, 1993, p. 66.

with rifles—many of which were stolen after the group killed Peruvian soldiers—along with Uzis, RPG-7 rocket-propelled grenade launchers, M60 machine guns, and 81-mm mortars.[47] Sendero's members also frequently used dynamite, obtained from Peru's many small mining camps, to construct the bombs and other explosive devices that they employed.[48]

Initially, Sendero's support came from elements of the Peruvian peasantry that were interested in Sendero's message, which included advocacy for expanded social service provision and improved governance. But, as Robert Kent argues, true ideological support for the organization was limited.[49] Sendero's supporters were likely less attuned to the organization's Marxist ideology than they were to its arguments against the Peruvian government. Over time, and as the organization became more militant, it broadened its base of support by arresting, trying, and sanctioning criminals and others who were not otherwise subject to the Peruvian criminal justice system. The list of usual offenders included those who preyed on rural populations, principally rustlers, petty criminals, perpetrators of domestic assault, unscrupulous merchants, and others who had committed actions considered offensive to Sendero's leadership.[50] Sendero's provision of justice—at least initially and up until the organization became maniacally and manifestly puritanical—won it a number of supporters and was helpful in the sense that it cut down on narcotics and alcohol consumption and other petty crimes in rural areas.[51]

In the early stages of Sendero's operations, it derived its funding mostly from sympathetic donors and by expropriating money from

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[47] Fitz-Simons, 1993, p. 65.

[48] See Fitz-Simons, 1993, p. 65, and Gordon H. McCormick, *The Shining Path and the Future of Peru*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, R-3781-DOS/OSD, 1990, p. 24.

[49] Robert B. Kent, "Geographical Dimensions of the Shining Path Insurgency in Peru," *Geographical Review*, Vol. 83, No. 4, October 1993, p. 450.

[50] See Lewis Taylor, "Counter-Insurgency Strategy, the PCP–Sendero Luminoso and the Civil War in Peru, 1980–1996," *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, Vol. 17, No. 1, January 1998, p. 42.

[51] See McClintock, 1988, p. 139.

landowners and elements of the peasantry.[52] Over time, and as the organization became more militant, Sendero expanded its sources of funding by developing exploitive relationships with local coca growers and drug traffickers.[53] In essence, it established itself as a broker for both parties. Its activities included forcing coca traffickers to pay the growers more for their products and taking payment for the protection of the traffickers' airstrips and laboratories.[54] All participants in the coca industry—growers, processors, and traffickers—were subject to Sendero's "taxation."[55] And members collected these taxes by force, when necessary. Sendero was able to expand its sources of funding by muscling in on an existing relationship and, over time, it even sought to replace the traffickers where it could.[56] At its height, Sendero was taking in tens of millions of dollars per year by leveraging the coca industry and engaging in the coca trade.[57] While Sendero *did* use much of this coca money to provide various social services to Peru's peasants and ethnic populations, it also directed some of this funding to its military campaign throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s.

While Sendero had a vision of providing its version of justice and revolution to Peru's impoverished ethnic populations and, for a long period, engaged in mostly nonviolent activities, this all changed as the organization began arming itself and using force to implement its vision. But Sendero's employment of violence was less an evolution of thought and practice than an expression of the group's original intent. Sendero's leadership knew that it would eventually have to employ violent means for its revolution to succeed. Indeed, it could be argued that

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[52] McCormick, 1990, p. 22.

[53] Particularly in the Upper Huallaga Valley area of Peru but also in other coca growing areas. Coca growers were frequently not ideologically aligned with Sendero but were, at least initially, happy to accept the organization's protection from coca traffickers. See McClintock, 1988, p. 137.

[54] See Felbab-Brown, 2010, pp. 48–49; Fitz-Simons, 1993, p. 65; and Kent, 1993, p. 449.

[55] See Gregory, 2009, and Gordon H. McCormick, *The Shining Path and Peruvian Terrorism*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, P-7297, 1987, p. 23.

[56] See Felbab-Brown, 2010, pp. 48–49.

[57] McClintock, 1988, p. 137.

Sendero *wanted* to employ violence and came to relish violence as it fought to achieve its desired ends. As William Rosenau notes, Sendero shared the Khmer Rouge's "adulation" of violence and freely admitted that violence was a prerequisite for achieving its aims.[58] Sendero eventually got its wish when it provoked the Peruvian government into a war that resulted in billions of dollars in property damage and upwards of 70,000 deaths,[59] many from savage acts of barbarism.

Sendero's Violence

The violence that Peru experienced between 1980 and 1993, which in many ways mirrored the situation in Mexico, can best be characterized as plentiful and obscene. Death, dismemberment, and torture were commonplace. Both Sendero and Peruvian forces were responsible for committing atrocities and perpetrating gross human rights violations. They were equally brutal in compelling Peru's peasant population and others to comply with their directives.[60] As the conflict progressed, Peru's armed forces became slightly more humane and Sendero became comparatively more brutal.[61] At the conflict's peak, Peru led the world in disappearances,[62] and thousands were killed annually: Most of the dead were Peruvian civilians.[63] In the first ten years of the conflict, roughly 20,000 Peruvians were killed, 500,000 people were

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[58] Rosenau, 1994, pp. 313, 316–317.

[59] Yaworsky, 2009, p. 653.

[60] Victims of the violence came from all sectors of Peruvian society and included school-teachers, government officials, peasants, business owners, drug traffickers, and actual combatants. See Palmer, 1986, p. 139; Ponciano H. del Pino, "Family, Culture, and 'Revolution': Everyday Life with Sendero Luminoso," in Steve J. Stern, ed., *Shining and Other Paths: War and Society in Peru, 1980–1995*, Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1998, pp. 167–168; and McClintock, 1998, p. 68.

   Mockaitis, 2011, p. 42. Both security forces and Sendero savaged the *rondas campesinos*. The former did so when the *rondas* did not do as they were told, the latter when they did. See Simon Strong, *Shining Path: Terror and Revolution in Peru*, New York: Times Books, 1992, p. 139.

[61] See Yaworsky, 2009, p. 660.

[62] See Yaworsky, 2009, pp. 659–660.

[63] See McCormick, 1993, p. 25.

forced from their homes, and nearly $10 billion in infrastructure and property was destroyed.[64]

Sendero got off to a relatively slow start in its campaign of violence. In 1980 and 1981, it committed only a few mortal acts, and it was responsible for only 120 deaths in 1982. But this did not last long: Between 1980 and 1986, Sendero's activities lead to an estimated 10,000 deaths;[65] from 1989 to 1992 nearly 3,000 died at Sendero's hands each year.[66] Despite the varying degrees of its lethality, Sendero was always capable of brutality. The group's violence was partly a constituent of its justice system: Guilty verdicts were often accompanied by sadistic punishments. For example, those who were found guilty of obvious corruption, involvement with prostitution, or open narcotics consumption were often flogged and even murdered, sometimes by decapitation, by Sendero acolytes, and almost always publicly.[67] Generally speaking, those who disobeyed Sendero's orders were considered guilty of betrayal and were thus sentenced to death.[68]

Sendero members not only killed a lot of people, but they did so with a certain zest and perversion that set the group apart from other contemporaneous revolutionary movements, particularly those that were supposedly fighting for the benefit of the "people." Furthermore, Sendero's violence worsened in scope and degree as the conflict wore on. In a 1983 incident, Sendero members shot or axed to death civilians who were left trying to defend themselves with only stones.[69] Later the group's attacks included the execution of a dozen adults and children by machete blows.[70] It was also responsible for slitting the throats of nearly 100 peasants whose heads were also smashed in with stones,[71]

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[64] Felbab-Brown, 2010, p. 35.

[65] McCormick, 1987, p. 2.

[66] Clutterbuck, 1995, pp. 77–79.

[67] See Simpson, 1993, p. 131, and Rosenau, 1994, p. 317.

[68] See the discussion in Rosenau, 1994, p. 317.

[69] Strong, 1992, pp. 140–141.

[70] Rosenau, 1994, p. 317.

[71] Del Pino, 1998, pp. 167–168.

the massacre of church worshipers who were shot and then set ablaze,[72] and attacks on peasant organizations, Roman Catholic activists, and even Peru's Institute for Rural Education.[73] Cynthia McClintock recounts one of Sendero's most notorious killings, the murder of Maria Elena Moyano: "After her assassination, her body was blown to bits in front of her children."[74] Moyano, like the five priests and two nuns who became the targets of Sendero's "annihilation teams," was guilty of "helping the poor."[75] For the Sendero's victims, beheadings were common, eyes were gouged out, men were castrated, children were disemboweled, and "human bonfires were set."[76] Some of Sendero's victims were hacked apart or had their lips sewn shut so that the "soul" could not escape.[77]

The purported rationale for Sendero's perverted violence varied: Violence was a necessary component in its fight against the government; there was a need to engender fear among the peasants, and violence was a means of sending this message; it was fitting justice for criminals or those cooperating with the state; or it was simply what members of the organization wanted to do.[78] Sendero determined early on that it would "need" to kill "in a systematic and depersonalized way as part of an agreed-upon strategy."[79] Accordingly, some Sendero cells used beatings and fear to coerce Peru's peasants into renouncing ideas that were incompatible with the group's philosophy.[80] Other cells determined that vigilantism against criminals would engender "grat-

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[72] Del Pino, 1998, pp. 167–168.

[73] See Kent, 1993, p. 451.

[74] McClintock, 1998, p. 68.

[75] Fitz-Simons, 1993, p. 68.

[76] McClintock, 1998, p. 68.

[77] Fitz-Simons, 1993, p. 67.

[78] Some Sendero leaders claimed that they "must employ violence" (Zirakzadeh, 2002, p. 66).

[79] Gustavo Gorriti, *The Shining Path: A History of the Millenarian War in Peru*, Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1999, p. 99.

[80] Zirakzadeh, 2002, p. 79.

itude and support."[81] Sometimes, Sendero would massacre an entire village and then post a "death list" of those who were also "slated to be brought to justice."[82] And, on occasion, the group would purge its own ranks of those who were not sufficiently dedicated to its cause.[83] Put simply, violence was part of the organization's culture and ethos. McClintock argues that Sendero socialized its members, including children, to become used to violence. Young children were "taught to kill chickens so that they would be accustomed to blood, and by the age of nine [they] were smashing skulls with stones."[84]

Sendero's violence knew few bounds, and the organization fought with nearly every group involved in the conflict: the government, other insurgent groups, traffickers, and Peru's peasants. On occasion, Sendero's actions spawned violent revolts by what were, early on, poorly armed peasants.[85] Some observers claim that Sendero was not indiscriminate in its application of violence insofar as it carefully chose its victims. Daniel Fitz-Simons argues that Sendero's tactics were calculated to "set an example or carry symbolic meaning," and it targeted government officials, school workers, missionaries, and others for assassination.[86] Be that as it may, Sendero appeared as much a "death cult" as it did a thoughtful and calculating leftist revolutionary movement,[87] and its later description as a "narco-terror" group was apt.[88] Violence

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[81] Zirakzadeh, 2002, p. 79.

[82] McCormick, 1990, p. 20. Sendero boasted of its "extermination campaign" against the Ashaninka Indians. Fitz-Simons, 1993, p. 71.

[83] Zirakzadeh, 2002, p. 79. Sendero, unlike many other insurgent organizations, rarely strayed from its initial causes or rationale for existence. See Cornell, 2005b, p. 757, and Fitz-Simons, 1993, p. 64.

[84] McClintock, 1998, p. 68.

[85] Some peasants made sharpened spears to fight Sendero as battles erupted not long after Sendero began its campaign of violence. See Fitz-Simons, 1993, p. 68; Kent, 1993, p. 444; and Guran, 2008, p. 21. See also Zirakzadeh, 2002, p. 80.

[86] Fitz-Simons, 1993, p. 67.

[87] Gorriti, 1999, p. 99.

[88] Louise I. Shelley and John T. Picarelli, "Methods Not Motives: Implications of the Convergence of International Organized Crime and Terrorism," *Police Practice and Research*, Vol. 3, No. 4, 2002, p. 313.

was extolled by Sendero's leadership and among its ranks as young men, women, and children all participated in the groups' murders.[89]

The State and Peruvian Forces in the 1980s

In early 1981, the Peruvian government began to strike back against Sendero and other insurgent groups. But its means of doing so were mostly ad hoc and ill conceived.[90] The government began by suspending elements of the constitution related to search and seizure and arrest to disencumber its security forces. It further allowed security forces in Peru's southern Andes to detain citizens without filing charges and to enter their homes without a court order.[91] These activities enraged citizens but had little real effect on the insurgency, and Peru's militant groups continued to grow.

Because the insurgency, especially Sendero, did not unleash its full capabilities in the first two years of the conflict, the Peruvian government treated it as a law-and-order issue. But, in 1983, Sendero upped the ante as it began a wave of attacks against the Peruvian government and other entities that resulted in scores of casualties. The insurgency looked less and less like a law-and-order issue as the body count rose and as Peruvian businesses and homes were being destroyed. These attacks effected a change in how the Peruvian government viewed the conflict and how it chose to prosecute its COIN campaign. It responded to the attacks by unleashing its security forces to conduct what Nelson Manrique describes as the "indiscriminate use of terror against the peasantry."[92]

Between 1983 and 1984, Peru's military and police forces began a notoriously violent COIN campaign that lasted for the better part of a decade. These forces operated with relative impunity, arresting and killing people seemingly at their discretion. Like in Mexico, although

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[89] See McClintock, 1998, p. 67, and del Pino, 1998, pp. 167–168.

[90] See Manwaring, 1995, p. 165.

[91] Zirakzadeh, 2002, p. 82.

[92] Nelson Manrique, "The War for the Central Sierra," in Steve J. Stern, ed., *Shining and Other Paths: War and Society in Peru, 1980–1995*, Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1998, p. 193.

with greater brutality and indiscrimination, their presence in an area or region usually portended a dramatic increase in casualties of all types.[93] The government's operating assumption was that Peru's peasants supported Sendero, and they thus deserved a similar fate.[94] Peru's COIN tactics led to severe violations of human rights and included manifold forced disappearances;[95] the employment of hit squads to kidnap, beat, and kill suspected terrorists;[96] summary execution, rape, and intimidation;[97] and mass murder.[98] In 1986, Peru's armed forces were involved in the massacre of 259 prisoners as they brutally crushed two prison riots.[99] During this period, this kind of violence was par for the course. Interestingly, and despite substantial evidence that the military was involved in significant abuses of Peru's peasantry, no member of the Peruvian military was convicted of human rights abuses during the conduct of COIN operations.[100]

Death, at the hands of both Sendero and Peru's armed forces, was everywhere. The Peruvian armed forces' heavy-handed COIN tactics did little to abate the conflict. Instead, they further alienated Peru's farmers and peasants and spurred a continuous pattern of violence and counterviolence between government forces and Sendero.[101] And while the death toll among the combatants continued to rise, it was the Peruvian peasantry that bore the brunt of the violence.[102] Defining the violence and identifying those responsible was challenging. While Sendero

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[93] See Palmer, 1986, p. 139.

[94] Simpson, 1993, pp. 131–132. See also Yaworsky, 2009, p. 653.

[95] Zirakzadeh, 2002, p. 83.

[96] Zirakzadeh, 2002, p. 83.

[97] Topp, 1992, p. 6.

[98] Fitz-Simons, 1993, p. 71.

[99] Clutterbuck, 1995, p. 79.

[100] Strong, 1992, p. 133.

[101] Many peasants regarded the Peruvian police as "just another group of armed thugs" (Fitz-Simons, 1993, p. 69).

[102] See Frank Hyland, "Peru's Sendero Luminoso: From Maoism to Narco-Terrorism," *Terrorism Monitor*, Vol. 6, No. 23, December 8, 2008, p. 3.

was rightly considered a group of butchers who attacked government forces and agents and preyed on unarmed peasants, every person killed by Peru's army and police forces was, ipso facto, a "terrorist."[103]

Although Peru's armed forces—much like those in present-day Mexico—committed manifold abuses that undermined the stated goals of the government's COIN efforts, they did take some steps that proved useful in the fight against the insurgents. For the most part, Peru's military correctly recognized that any disruption to coca growing operations would only further agitate growers and other Peruvians involved in the business. Indeed, as Vanda Felbab-Brown argues, "When the government undertook aggressive eradication, the efficacy of its counterinsurgency policy was greatly reduced."[104] Furthermore, they were aware that Sendero needed the money that it was making by facilitating and controlling the coca trade. Given this knowledge, the Peruvian military took steps to protect coca farming—in much the same way that Sendero had been protecting the trade. It forbade anti-narcotics operations in some areas, which were, for the most part, the province of Peru's police forces. Given that Sendero was not exactly well received by the peasants it abused and murdered, this tactic often led the coca growers to withdraw their support for Sendero or even openly revolt against the insurgents.[105]

While Peru's armed forces took steps to protect the coca growers as part of its COIN campaign, its actions were not entirely benevolent nor were they necessarily the product of shrewd battlefield calculations. As noted earlier, the Sendero's emergence in 1980 coincided with a significant downturn in Peru's economy, and public and security services positions in Peru, like many other jobs, did not pay well. For instance, in 1988, an army colonel with 20 years of service was paid roughly $80 per month,[106] and the average Peruvian soldier made roughly $12 per

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[103] Clutterbuck, 1995, p. 88.

[104] Felbab-Brown, 2010, p. 50.

[105] In 1984, the Peruvian military successfully employed this tactic in the Upper Huallaga Valley. See McClintock, 1988, p. 137.

[106] Strong, 1992, p. 152.

month throughout the 1980s.[107] It comes as no surprise that many of Peru's officials became involved in profitable criminal activities, particularly Peru's burgeoning coca industry. Peru's government, military, and police forces were rife with corruption.[108] It became evident that, in the process of conducting their COIN campaign, Peru's armed forces were not merely evicting Sendero from coca growing areas: They were supplanting them as guardians and benefactors of the industry.

To facilitate its corrupt practices, Peru's military leadership developed a quid pro quo relationship with coca traffickers: The military would provide protection to the traffickers, and the traffickers would help the military keep Sendero out of certain regions.[109] Coca-derived corruption became so prevalent and the business became so lucrative that many army officers were in competition for commands and positions in the Upper Huallaga Valley, the seat of Peru's coca farming.[110] For the most part, the Peruvian army combined its official business and profit-making quite well. In fact, it was able to secure certain areas so effectively that it was able to both fight off Sendero forces and, on occasion, prevent the entry of Peruvian police forces and anti-drug patrols.[111] It should be noted that while Peru's military and police forces were both highly corrupt, the military had the upper hand in controlling the coca industry. Its job was to combat the insurgency and fight terrorism, while the police were charged with combating the drug trade.[112] Over time, the relationship between Peru's military and police became strained as each seemingly tried to outdo the other. The military actively took steps to push the police out of the drug trade

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[107] Fitz-Simons, 1993, p. 69.

[108] See discussion in Fernando Rospigliosi, "Democracy's Bleak Prospects," in Joseph S. Tulchin and Gary Bland, eds., *Peru in Crisis: Dictatorship or Democracy*, Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1994, p. 39. See also Clutterbuck, 1995, p. 88.

[109] See Felbab-Brown, 2010, p. 59.

[110] Fitz-Simons, 1993, p. 69.

[111] See Fitz-Simons, 1993, p. 69. As in Mexico, the roles and responsibilities of the police and military in Peru were not well defined, and relations between the two were contentious, to say the least.

[112] See Simpson, 1993, p. 197.

altogether, and both sides arrested people who were under the other side's protection.[113]

Although Peruvian forces did enjoy some success in fighting Sendero throughout the 1980s, the group was still a significant force. The group reached its peak in the late 1980s, killing thousands of peasants and members of the armed forces and engaging in operations in wide swaths of the Peruvian countryside and many of its urban areas. Very few places in Peru were secure, including Peru's capital city, Lima. Between the last quarter of 1989 and the first quarter of 1991, Lima was the target of more than "634 acts of political violence."[114] It was becoming obvious that the COIN campaign that Peruvian forces had waged for nearly a decade was proving unsuccessful. And it was not until the election of Alberto Fujimori in 1990 that the Peruvian government began to turn the tide against Sendero.

The Fujimori Government

The emergency actions taken by successive Peruvian governments to fight Sendero and other insurgent organizations were considered extreme, but those taken by the Fujimori government were comparatively more drastic. Fujimori's actions during this period would lead to a prison sentence, but he was fairly well received by the Peruvian people because of his effectiveness in thwarting and then reversing Peru's insurgency.

Within two years of being elected, Fujimori dismissed the Peruvian parliament, which he blamed for the country's COIN failures, and dissolved the Court of Constitutional Guarantees. This allowed him to govern as an autocrat and, later, "to rule by executive decree."[115] But Fujimori's actions were not limited to restructuring the government to favor his individualistic rule. He also severely restricted free speech and the press by broadening the official definition of "terrorism" to include nearly any act or statement that painted the insurgency

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[113] See Simpson, 1993, p. 187.

[114] Gordon H. McCormick, *From the Sierra to the Cities: The Urban Campaign of the Shining Path*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, R-4150-USDP, 1992, p. 72.

[115] Zirakzadeh, 2002, p. 83.

in a favorable light or that could be considered a criticism, much less an indictment, of Peru's armed forces.[116] Between 1990 and 1995, the government arrested and convicted more than 5,000 Peruvians "for violations of antiterrorist laws."[117] Human rights organizations considered many of these arrests and convictions to be trumped-up at best.[118] Nonetheless, anti-terrorism laws had the intended chilling effect: They substantially reduced internal interference with and criticism of government COIN policies.

Perhaps one of Fujimori's most controversial actions was his broadening of the Peruvian government's control over the coca trade. Beginning in the early 1990s, the Fujimori government actively protected coca traffickers and others involved in the coca industry. This dealt a rather serious blow to Sendero's operations, which were already suffering from the backlash of Peru's increasingly violent peasantry. Menno Vellinga argues that Fujimori's decision to enter the coca industry fueled the development of a pervasive network of corruption that included elements of Peru's electoral college, judiciary, legislature, financial sector, and military. It is estimated that the government generated \$264 million annually through its participation in the coca industry.[119]

These allowed Fujimori to centralize power within his office. They also gave him substantial control over a corrupt network of government officials and military officers who relied on his benefice. He was able to leverage this power to create a veritable army of spies and informants operating throughout the country. Traffickers, coca growers, members of the police and military, and government employees all had cause—financial, self-preservation, or otherwise—to help the Fujimori government in its fight against Sendero forces. Despite the drastic measures that Fujimori took to consolidate power for himself and to combat Sendero, it was perhaps his risky decision to decentralize con-

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[116] Zirakzadeh, 2002, p. 83.

[117] Zirakzadeh, 2002, p. 83.

[118] Zirakzadeh, 2002, p. 83.

[119] Vellinga, 2004, p. 383.

trol over the COIN struggle that produced the best results. Early in his tenure, Fujimori made the decision to expand the capabilities of the peasantry's existing *rondas campesinas*, or traditional village defense organizations, by providing them with arms to fight the Sendero forces.[120] This move essentially invalidated one of Sendero's greatest defensive strengths: its ability to leverage the sanctuary of the mountainous and jungle-covered terrain of Peru's southern Andes region.

Fujimori's decision to provide arms to the *rondas* was, if not a stroke of genius, at least well timed. Even in the 1990s, when the government and military were both awash in coca money, it was still expensive and difficult to confront Sendero where it lived and operated. For nearly a decade, Peru's military had struggled to maintain a presence in the Andes highlands and jungles—if it even tried at all. Often, because of a lack of capability and staying power, the Peruvian military was forced to cede operational control of certain areas to Sendero forces. Even where the Peruvian military was able to deploy en masse and maintain a presence, Sendero was mobile enough to shift its bases of operations and confound these efforts. Sendero was able to play a waiting game and conduct a war of attrition that Peruvian forces could not effectively counter. The only people who had regular contact with Sendero throughout this period were drug traffickers, whom the Fujimori government had been co-opting, and Peruvian peasants, who had grown quite tired of Sendero's abuses and murderous practices.

In 1991 and 1992, per Fujimori's directives, the military began to issue rifles and other weapons to the *rondas* with the intent that they be used against Sendero. The *rondas* were armed with more than 15,000 rifles and shotguns in the early 1990s, a number that did not include the many thousands of weapons that, as Miguel La Serna points out, were "secured illegally through accords with drug traffickers."[121] By 1992, it was estimated that 526 villages were armed and 1,117 more had applied

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[120]The Peruvian military had already established something of a relationship with the *rondas* insofar as it permitted the growth and sale of coca leaf and paste.

[121]Miguel La Serna, *The Corner of the Living: Ayacucho on the Eve of the Shining Path Insurgency*, Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina, 2012, p. 200.

for arms.[122] By 1993, there were more than 4,000 "civil defense com-mittees" staffed by approximately 300,000 *ronderos*, 10,000 of whom likely possessed rifles.[123]

The Fujimori government's informal partnership with the *rondas* led to a significant shifting of sides. Sendero could no longer count on the passive support of the peasants. Instead, after the government armed the *rondas*, Sendero was more likely than ever to be attacked by the peasants, who could now defend themselves. On occasion, the *rondas* took the opportunity to behead Sendero fighters in what was perhaps fitting justice for the barbarism in which the organization had engaged over the previous decade.[124] The *rondas* posed a significant threat to the insurgency because they were essentially everywhere and could regularly disrupt Sendero operations if not defeat the group's forces.[125] The decision to arm the *rondas* was perhaps one of the most consequential choices in the 12-year conflict between the Peruvian government and Sendero forces.

What Was Done to Improve the Situation?

Although some of Fujimori's actions were controversial, they did help put Peru into a state of lockdown that was probably necessary for iso-lating the large and pervasive force that Sendero had developed. His transformation of the Peruvian government created a network of infor-mants and spies that helped identify and eliminate elements of Sende-ro's leadership. His efforts to take over the drug trade, however corrupt, decreased Sendero's revenue streams. Finally, his decision to arm the *rondas* helped pressure Sendero's operational wings and disrupt their capacity to manage the coca industry. But despite these tactics, Send-ero did not suffer a truly significant setback until its founder and spiri-tual leader was arrested in Lima in 1992. Abimael Guzmán had always

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[122]Clutterbuck, 1995, p. 86.

[123]Carlos Ivan Degregori, "Shining Path and Counterinsurgency Strategy Since the Arrest of Abimael Guzman," in Joseph S. Tulchin and Gary Bland, eds., *Peru in Crisis: Dictatorship or Democracy*, Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1994, p. 89.

[124]See Zirakzadeh, 2002, p. 83.

[125]See Strong, 1992, p. 258.

been the intellectual and philosophical glue holding the organization together, and Sendero was most certainly a cult of personality. Accordingly, upon Guzmán's arrest, conviction, and imprisonment, Sendero largely disbanded. Many of its former members either faded away into Peruvian society or melted back into the jungles of Peru to continue their lives as drug traffickers and erstwhile terrorists.

How Did It End Up?

While the Fujimori government did improve Peru's macroeconomic situation and has been credited with dismantling Sendero and Peru's other, lesser insurgent organizations, it nonetheless ended in disgrace and prosecutions for human rights violations and widespread corruption. Its tactics and overall strategy, while effective, were brutal and far outside what is considered acceptable according to either international norms or Peruvian law. Sendero, like Peru's other insurgent groups, largely disappeared and is today only a shell of its former self. What remains is a small cadre of terrorists who are more involved in coca production and trafficking than in leading revolutionary movements.

Similarities and Differences Between Peru and Mexico

Peru and Mexico share a number of characteristics, but four stand out as particularly important: (1) corruption, (2) the degree and type of violence perpetrated, (3) the coca industry's influence on the conflict, and (4) the presence of ungoverned spaces. However, Peru was different in many ways, and these differences are significant for a number of reasons. First, Mexico's conflict seemingly lacks a significant ideological component. Second, the Mexican government is not directly involved in the coca industry. And third, while Mexico has an informal economy, it is not nearly as large as the one that existed in Peru in the 1980s and early 1990s.

Violence

The number of people killed in Peru's conflict is staggering, especially given that Peru is not a very large country. The mass killing of inno-

cent civilians, for seemingly little cause other than being a part of the peasantry, was common. What is even more troubling is how Sendero's depravity is mirrored in the actions of Mexico's VDTOs. Grotesque beheadings, human bonfires, dismemberment, and torture were widespread practices in Peru, and the number of deaths and types of violence employed there were entirely unnecessary: It is difficult to believe that Sendero could not have accomplished its goals by other means or that government forces could not have been more discriminating. The actions of both sides in the conflict led to the development of a culture of violence that was seemingly self-perpetuating. Even Peru's peasantry sometimes engaged in mass slaughter when it had the opportunity. And despite claims to the contrary, this violence was, at best, only partially instrumental, particularly as the conflict wore on. Sendero and Peruvian forces were equally to blame for the degree of violence employed during the period examined here. This had few positive outcomes, as Peru's civilians became little more than targetable pawns in the insurgent-counterinsurgent struggle and the original rationale for the conflict was largely lost.

Indiscriminate Mayhem or "Anomic Violence"

Indiscriminate mayhem or acts of anomic violence were largely absent from the conflict in Peru. As such, similarities and differences between Peru and Mexico in this respect are not particularly relevant for our purposes.

Traditional Threat/Insurgency

While Mexico's narcotics traffickers are dedicated to the pursuit of profits and power, they are not engaged in an ideological struggle. That is, they do not have a perceptible belief structure underlying their activities. This was not true for Sendero: It was engaged in a highly ideological struggle, and profits from the coca industry were not its objective but merely a means to an end. This should be considered as a good thing on the whole, principally because it is possible that Mexico's traffickers would be willing to quit their violent behaviors if they determine that this course of action is more beneficial in advancing their

goals. It is unlikely that, absent its spiritual leader, Sendero would have ever willing adopted a different strategy or changed its tactics.

Ethnically Motivated Violence

Because Mexico does not have a high level of ethnically motivated violence, lessons for coping with this challenge are not particularly relevant for our purposes.

Lack of Economic Opportunities

Peru's informal economy was a double-edged sword. In some ways, it was beneficial: It provided employment and income to many Peruvians while the insurgency was raging and probably helped stave off a degree of unrest that would have otherwise likely occurred. But it also diverted labor and resources away from more productive industries and encouraged economic activity that was neither taxable nor subject to regulation. Mexico's informal economy is also sizable. And, as in Peru, it is likely that it could erupt in the event of a large economic downturn or significant strife. This would significantly weaken the Mexican government's already reduced capacity to collect tax revenues and retain control over the activities of its population.

Weapon Availability

Peru was one of two cases in which weapons were not available in extreme numbers and, thus, proves a poor comparison for Mexico in this regard.

Competition over a Resource

As Peru's conflict expanded, so too did its coca industry. It is unlikely that Sendero could have supported its operations without coca industry money. It is also difficult to believe that the Peruvian armed forces would have had nearly as much interest in conducting the COIN campaign if it had not been such a profitable enterprise. The money generated by the coca industry most certainly prolonged the conflict because it facilitated Sendero's existence and provided a powerful motive for the participation of Peru's security forces. Because of its strategic value,

the coca industry came to dominate the Peruvian economy and the decisionmaking of many of the conflict's participants.

Ungoverned Spaces

Sendero's greatest strength was perhaps its ability to operate in areas that the Peruvian government could not reasonably control, where it could raise funding, plan operations, recuperate, and stage attacks on Peruvian forces. Operating in these areas was a low-cost endeavor for Sendero. By comparison, it was highly resource-intensive and logistically difficult for the Peruvian armed forces to deploy to Peru's mountainous regions. Because these areas were, in effect, "ungoverned," Sendero was able to control a large portion of the coca industry there, and the proceeds were used to further expand the organization's operations. For the most part, even when only lightly armed, Sendero had a monopoly on the use of force in the highlands of Peru—at least until the government began arming the *rondas*. Although Guzmán's capture was the death knell for Sendero, the organization came under increasing duress when the Fujimori government began to arm proxy forces throughout the countryside and, in effect, reduced the amount of ungoverned space that Sendero could leverage.

State/Institutional Weakness

Unlike Mexico, Peru's government *at all levels* became directly involved in the coca industry and took a number of steps to protect its interests. Although this move ultimately reduced the profits that Sendero could earn through the drug trade and thus reduced its operational capacity, it also further corrupted Peru's military, police, legislature, and courts. The benefits of this strategy (outside of pure profit) were many but so too were its costs, at least in terms of how the Peruvian government discharged its powers and served its citizens.

Patronage/Corruption

As in present-day Mexico, corruption in Peru during this period was pervasive. But unlike in Mexico, Peru's corruption stretched across nearly all sectors and levels of government: Vast swaths of the military, police forces, elected officials, and common public servants engaged

in corrupt practices. What was worse was the fact that government officials—particularly in the military and police forces—were not just receiving payments. Rather, they were actively supplanting Sendero in the drug trade. Although supplanting Sendero did help weaken the organization, it also severely hindered of the Peruvian government's ability to administer the state. As in Mexico, at least a portion of the corruption that swept Peru during the conflict was the result of fairly low-paid security forces becoming too closely involved in the fight for too long and with far too much autonomy.

Lessons for Mexico

The violence Mexico is experiencing is not all-encompassing. Furthermore, it is not the result of an ideological-turned-resource insurgency. Nor is it even partially the result of an ethnic struggle. Mexico's problem will not be solved by the capture of one charismatic leader, nor will it be substantially aided by the state's investment in the drug trade. Nonetheless, the Peruvian conflict provides a number of lessons that are broadly applicable to the situation in Mexico. First, the forces conducting a COIN campaign or even a law-enforcement operation need to have unity of effort. Peru's security forces were often at odds and engaged in behaviors that eroded each other's effectiveness. This is not unlike the situation in Mexico, where the roles and responsibilities of state security forces are not well defined and the relationships among different organizations are contentious. Second, ungoverned areas need to be reduced. As in present-day Mexico, the Peruvian government was either unwilling or incapable of effectively enforcing the law in certain areas of the country. This allowed Sendero to fester and accrue power. A presence in Peru's otherwise ungoverned areas would have limited Sendero's growth and operational effectiveness. Whether this presence was achieved directly through the armed forces or indirectly through the *rondas* or other proxy forces was largely immaterial. The government had to keep pressure on its adversaries and needed useful intelligence on their activities. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the Peruvian government should have considered leveraging the peas-

antry much earlier in the conflict and should likewise have *prevented* the abuse and slaughter of its citizens. The peasants had little recourse but to cooperate with Sendero even when their interests significantly diverged, and Sendero started treating them as chattel and veritable slaves. While the peasants would have likely had significant issues with the Peruvian government regardless of Sendero's behavior, their later cooperation with the government showed that they valued their lives far more than any anger and resentment they harbored for Peru's history of poor governance. This echoes present-day conditions in Mexico, where a number of disaffected self-defense militias have emerged. Like in Peru, the Mexican government should pay heed to these groups and leverage them to the extent possible where they have intersecting goals and like-minded interests.

The Balkans (1991–2010)

Case Selection Categories: Warlordism, High Level of Organized Crime

Shortly after the end of the Cold War, Serbian politicians in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia delivered incendiary, ethnically charged speeches that celebrated the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo, a conflict that brought an end to Serbian independence at the hands of the Turks.[1] Slobodan Milošević (later president of Serbia and the rump Yugoslavia) purposefully stoked the flames of hypernationalism, leading to factionalism, sectarianism, ethnic discord, and, ultimately, genocide. The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia slowly broke apart as a succession of groups in the ethnically mixed federal state agitated for "national liberation" by unilaterally declaring independence, prompting extreme nationalism and ethnic conflict in Croatia, Bosnia, and Kosovo. Throughout the 1990s, the region descended into anarchy as armies, paramilitaries, insurgents, and criminal gangs fought for both power and profit. Only after a long and costly intervention by the United States, the UN, and the European Union—which cost the West significantly in resources and manpower—did the violence ebb and stability finally take hold.

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[1] Three years before Milošević's speech, a memorandum issued by the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts advocated the territorial expansion of Serbia into a Greater Serbia, seeking the unification of "all Serbs in one state." See Laura Silber and Allan Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, New York: Penguin, 1995, pp. 33–35, and Reneo Lukic and Allen Lynch, *Europe from the Balkans to the Urals: The Disintegration of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 191.

Conflict and Violence in the Balkans

In Bosnia alone, ethnic cleansing contributed to a humanitarian disaster unseen since World War II. Consider the following grim statistics:[2]

- 2.2 million (half the country's population) displaced, with 600,000 internally displaced persons
- more than 1.2 million refugees outside of Bosnia's borders
- 250,000 people killed
- 750,000 land mines still in place 11 years after the conflict ended.

As it did throughout the Eastern Bloc, the end of the Cold War exposed decades of state decay and the erosion of authority in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. What had been a weak state to start with was soon wracked by armed conflict as civil war and a contest for control over the state caused Yugoslavia to collapse and "balkanize." The term *balkanize* now appears in Merriam-Webster's dictionary as transitive verb meaning "to break up (as a region or group) into smaller and often hostile units," an indication of the level of state failure, instrumental behavior, illicit activity, and violent competition that came to characterize this region during the 1990s.[3] Militias and paramilitary outfits, especially the Serb Volunteer Guard (SDG), played an instrumental role in spreading violence and sustaining the conflict.

The Role of the Serb Volunteer Guard ("Arkan's Tigers")
Nonstate and substate actors featured prominently in the Balkans conflict, but perhaps none was more infamous than "Arkan's Tigers," an extremely brutal but elite militia led by "The Commandant," Željko "Arkan" Ražnatović.[4] The militia was organized by members of the

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[2]   James Dobbins, John G. McGinn, Keith Crane, Seth G. Jones, Rollie Lal, Andrew Rathmell, Rachel M. Swanger, and Anga R. Timilsina, *America's Role in Nation-Building: From Germany to Iraq*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MR-1753-RC, 2003, p. 90.

[3]   "Balkanize," *Merriam-Webster Online*, undated.

[4]   Misha Glenny, *McMafia: A Journey Through the Global Criminal Underworld*, New York: Vintage, 2008, p. 38. The purpose of this section is to detail some of the more anomic acts of violence during the wars in the Balkans. This is not to suggest that militias and paramili-

White Eagles, a Serbian paramilitary group linked to Vojislav Šešelj's extreme nationalist Serbian Radical Party, and operated as a private army under the auspices of the SDG in both Croatia and Bosnia. The White Eagles, and the Tigers in turn, initially operated at the behest of the Kontra Obavještajne Službe, Yugoslavia's counterintelligence service.[5]

Next to Milošević and Bosnian Serb war criminals Radovan Karadžić and Ratko Mladić (the former president and military chief of the Bosnian Serb government, respectively), Arkan was probably the most notorious character in the sad tragedy of the Bosnian conflict. Even before the Yugoslavia collapsed, Arkan was wanted for numerous criminal offenses throughout Europe, including armed robbery, extortion, and murder, and he had been imprisoned at various points in Sweden, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Germany.[6]

Above all, Arkan was known for the absolute fear that his name struck in the hearts of Croats and Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims). His legend spoke for itself. Rumors consistently swirled that Arkan and his Tigers were en route, causing those in his crosshairs to flee for their lives. Indeed, longtime Balkans correspondent for the BBC, journalist Misha Glenny, relates in her book *McMafia* that "nothing was more effective in the business of ethnic cleansing than the mere possibility of Arkan's imminent arrival."[7] In Mostar, a cultural hub of the ethnically mixed Herzegovina region, Arkan's militia marauded, singing nationalist songs with such provocative lyrics as "Oh Mostar, my brother, you

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taries were *the* defining aspect of the conflict. Rather, the main protagonist on the Bosnian Serb side was the Bosnian Serb army, composed of regular military formations led by former Yugoslav army officers. On the other side were Croatian army regulars and the Bosnian Muslim army, both of which later joined in the Bosnian Federation army. Paramilitaries on both sides (such as the Arkan Tigers) played a role in terrorizing the civilian population but had a secondary role in the actual fighting.

5 Lukic and Lynch, 1996, p. 190.

6 Glenny, 2008, p. 39.

7 Glenny, 2008, p. 39.

have always been Serbian." At the time, Serbs accounted for less than one-fifth of Mostar's population.[8]

Unlike militias in parts of Africa and South Asia, Arkan's Tigers were known for their military effectiveness and prowess in battle. But, most of all, the group became notorious for committing widespread atrocities throughout the region as it pursued an agenda of ethnic cleansing. This campaign of ethnic cleansing was deliberate. The SDG purposefully sought to eliminate non-Serbs from villages, towns, and cities in areas they controlled or sought to control. Their methods included forced expulsions, rape, kidnapping, torture, murder, extortion, and internment in concentration camps.[9] Once these areas were purged, they were looted and burned to the ground.

In addition to looting, smuggling, trafficking, and other criminal activities, Arkan's militia was funded, armed, and organized by state institutions, including the Serbian Ministry of Defense and the Serbian Orthodox Church.[10] In return for assistance from the latter, Arkan detailed some of his fighters to act as bodyguards for the Serbian Orthodox metropolitan archbishop of Montenegro. Arkan's ties to the church's leadership were strong. He marched alongside Patriarch Pavle in a procession through Belgrade in July 1993, in a display of solidarity with the recognized spiritual leader of the Serbian Orthodox Church.[11]

In the Republic of Serb Krajina (which was carved out of eastern Croatia but later reincorporated into Croatia), Arkan's fighters worked their way through Eastern Slavonia,[12] Baranja, and Western

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[8] Norman Cigar, *Genocide in Bosnia: The Policy of "Ethnic Cleansing*," College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1995, p. 44.

[9] Ivo H. Daalder, "Fear and Loathing in the Former Yugoslavia," in Michael E. Brown, ed., *The International Dimensions of Internal Conflict*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996, p. 54.

[10] Cigar, 1995, p. 36.

[11] Cigar, 1995, p. 68.

[12] The fighting in Eastern Slavonia, particularly in the region's largest city, Vukovar, was among the most intense and deadly of the Balkans conflict. Serbian artillery rained down on the area for more than 100 days, destroying much of its infrastructure and causing damage unparalleled in Europe since World War II. See John G. McGinn, "After the Explosion: International Action in the Aftermath of Nationalist War," *National Security Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 4, No. 1, Winter 1998.

Syrmia.[13] In Republika Srpska (the Serb-controlled part of Bosnia), they often fought alongside Yugoslav army soldiers in Bijeljina and Brcko. In Zvornik, the dead were so numerous that they had to be buried in canyons by bulldozers. Those who survived were robbed and expelled, leaving in droves as mosques were pulverized into rubble, along with any other symbols identified with Islam or Muslims.[14] Before leaving, Muslims were forced to clean up the wreckage and then crawl on their hands and knees to the post office to acquire the requisite exit documentation.[15] The Serbian government was both complicit and instrumental in the systematic expulsion of non-Serbs from Bosnia, even going so far as to aid Arkan by chartering state-owned trains to facilitate the deportation of Muslims.[16] Refugees who were not herded onto trains fled by foot and were shelled, sniped, and battered as they left.[17]

A deliberate strategy of Arkan and the Bosnian Serbs was the perpetration of extremely offensive violations of cultural and religious monuments and artifacts, which exacerbated the conflict and led to a further hardening of identities. By the end of 1992, nearly 70 percent of Bosnia's architectural infrastructure had been destroyed, including more than 300 mosques, 150 Orthodox churches, and 50 Catholic churches.[18] Religious leaders were specifically targeted for harassment and forced to sing Chetnik songs, make the sign of the cross, and consume alcohol (in direct violation of Islamic law) before being executed.[19]

In the village of Erdut in eastern Croatia, Arkan worked with the Serbian police to head a Serbian militia training camp. In some cases,

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[13] The Republic of Serb Krajina formed the Krajina Serb Army, which consisted of two forces: local/regional Serb Territorial Defense units and former Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) units.

[14] Cigar, 1995, pp. 54–55.

[15] Cigar, 1995, p. 58.

[16] Norman Cigar and Paul Williams, *Indictment at the Hague: The Milosevic Regime and Crimes of the Balkan War*, New York: New York University Press, 2002, p. 133.

[17] Cigar, 1995, p. 58

[18] R. Craig Nation, *War in the Balkans, 1991–2002*, Carlisle, Pa.: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, August 2003.

[19] Cigar, 1995, p. 58.

Arkan and his counterparts in the police force rounded up Serb refugees and compelled them to undergo training.[20] In addition to military training, recruits were indoctrinated with themes emphasizing no mercy for non-Serbs, including women, children, and the elderly, who were not immune to this violence.[21] Despite clear evidence of ethnic cleansing and forced expulsions, Arkan's fighters often denied any wrongdoing in interviews with the media, insisting that Muslims left their homes of their own volition and without coercion.

Throughout the Balkans, in Eastern Slavonia in 1991, in Foca in April 1992, and in towns throughout northwestern Bosnia, such as Banja Luka, Sanski Most, and Prijedor in 1995, Arkan's militia terrorized residents, committing war crimes and other crimes against humanity while employing rape as a weapon of war. These and other offenses have been comprehensively documented in reports issued by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia.[22]

In January 1993, Croatian forces violated the terms of a ceasefire by launching an offensive dubbed Operation Maslenica.[23] During this battle, Arkan's Tigers served as reinforcements alongside the Krajina Serb Army's 7th North Dalmatian Corps troops against Croatian Army troops (known as Hrvatska Vojska) and special operations units near the villages of Kasic, Paljuv, and Novigrad.[24] If Arkan's forces were outnumbered or encircled by adversaries, they could rely on the support of the Yugoslav Air Force and Army.[25]

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[20] Cigar and Williams, 2002, p. 134.

[21] Cigar, 1995, p. 65.

[22] International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, "The Prosecutor of the Tribunal Against Zeljko Raznatovic," Indictment for Crimes Against Humanity, Grave Breaches of the Geneva Conventions, and Violations of the Laws or Customs of War, September 30, 1997.

[23] Marcus Tanner, *Croatia: A Nation Forged in War*, New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1997, p. 288.

[24] Central Intelligence Agency, Office of Russian and European Analysis, *Balkan Battlegrounds: A Military History of the Yugoslav Conflict, 1990–1995*, Vol. 1, Washington, D.C., May 2002, p. 268.

[25] Cigar and Williams, 2002, p. 127.

In neighboring Bosnia in April 1993, Arkan's Tigers began to purge the Serb-controlled area of its Croat and Muslim populations. Arkan masterminded this campaign of ethnic cleansing as his ruthless but disciplined militias began massacring Muslims throughout the country. As they had done in eastern and northern Bosnia during the nascent stages of that conflict, Arkan's Tigers (along with Vojislav Šešelj's White Eagles) murdered random civilians and targeted prominent community leaders for execution once they moved into a new area.[26]

Besides the opportunity to murder non-Serb civilians without consequence, there were economic incentives for militias to raid towns and villages. Indeed, as Timothy Donais has noted, "Payment often came in the form of being allowed to be the first to loot, while many paramilitary leaders, Arkan being among the most prominent, took advantage of wartime conditions to engage heavily in smuggling and other black-market activities, often cooperating across confrontation lines."[27] Arkan's troops existed atop the hierarchy of groups given access to the most valuable assets, including cars, gold, and money. Goods that were not immediately consumable for profit were later sold on the black market in Belgrade, where Arkan reportedly "made a fortune."[28]

By the end of the 1990s, ethnic cleansing in Bosnia-Herzegovina alone resulted in the displacement of nearly half the country's population, with some displaced internally and some becoming refugees forced outside of Bosnia's borders.[29] Scholars have compared Arkan's actions with those of German SS-Einsatz units on the Eastern Front during World War II, as both cases involved the forced removal and "indiscriminate killing of civilians on a genocidal scale."[30] As a solution

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[26] Timothy Donais, *The Political Economy of Peacebuilding in Post-Dayton Bosnia*, London: Routledge, 2005, p. 68.

[27] Donais, 2005, p. 69.

[28] Peter Andreas, "The Clandestine Political Economy of War and Peace in Bosnia," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 48, 2004, p. 35.

[29] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *The State of the World's Refugees 2000: Fifty Years of Humanitarian Action*, New York: Oxford, 2000, p. 219.

[30] Lukic and Lynch, 1996, p. 193.

to the escalating situation in Kosovo during the latter half of the 1990s, Arkan advocated for the expulsion of the territory's Albanian population.[31] He maintained this stance even while serving as a parliamentary representative in Kosovo with business holdings in a casino, a hotel, a transportation company, and a radio station in the territory.

Arkan's rise from petty criminal to mob boss and warlord would have been impossible without the help of Milošević, Serbia's president during the Bosnian war and later president of the rump Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro).[32] Still, whatever immunity from prosecution Arkan enjoyed within Serbia, he could not escape the cycle of violence that continued even as the actual conflict itself wore down. He was killed in a gangland execution in 2000.

Explaining the Outbreak of Violence

What initially led to the violence may have been structurally different, in a sense, from the factors that helped undergird and sustain it, to say nothing of the factors that might have contributed to its savage nature. According to Ivo Daalder, three themes in particular led to Yugoslavia's violent collapse:[33]

- the rapid deterioration of the economy
- internal divisions within both the central government and the increasingly powerful and independent regional governments, with radically different visions of the future political order
- that these major changes were unfolding during a time of wholesale change in the global political system, as many nations began transitioning to democracy and market economies.

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[31] Sabrina P. Ramet, *Thinking About Yugoslavia: Scholarly Debates About the Yugoslav Breakup and the Wars in Bosnia and Kosovo*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 210.

[32] Christopher S. Stewart, *Hunting the Tiger: The Fast Life and Violent Death of the Balkans' Most Dangerous Man*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 2007, p. 121.

[33] Daalder, 1996, p. 38.

Once the powder keg was full, nationalist politicians began using ethnically charged language directed at the opposition and minorities. Widespread fear of political domination metastasized into ethnic violence and the breakdown of law and order. Akin to the situation in Mexico, the end of single-party rule and the attenuation of long-standing patronage networks in Yugoslavia radically altered the balance of power and opened up opportunity space for enterprising criminals. With ethnic tensions high, nationalist appeals gained legitimacy. "Against the backdrop of economic crisis, political conflict, and growing insecurity, these arguments had great appeal among the Serbs, and Milosevic exploited them skillfully to strengthen his political base."[34]

While the massacres that, in our view, amounted to genocide in Bosnia are remembered as perhaps the most salient characteristic of this troubled period, the vile nature of the conflict occasionally obscures other interesting features of the war. An understanding of this case would not be complete without an in-depth analysis of the illicit economy, criminal networks, state failure, and poor governance.

Illicit Economy, Crime, and Violence

War in the Balkans provided criminal entrepreneurs with opportunities to establish and maintain cross-border black markets. Toward the end of the 1990s, the black market was thought to account for roughly 50 percent of Bosnia's economy.[35] At the apex of the conflict, this figure was undoubtedly higher. Contributing to the pervasiveness of the illicit economy was a shadowy web of partnerships among the very groups that were fighting each other. Indeed, wartime interethnic cooperation in the form of clandestine trading demonstrated just how thin the line had become between patriotism and criminality.[36] Profit superseded ethnic loyalty as the war took on a self-sustaining logic of its own.[37]

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[34] Daalder, 1996, p. 43.

[35] Peter Singer, "Bosnia 2000: Phoenix or Flames?" *World Policy Journal*, Vol. 17, No. 1, Spring 2000, p. 32.

[36] Andreas, 2004, p. 37.

[37] Timothy Donais, "The Political Economy of Stalemate: Organised Crime, Corruption and Economic Deformation in Post-Dayton Bosnia," *Conflict, Security, and Development*, Vol. 3, No. 3, 2003, p. 363.

As brutal as the conflict was, there is little doubt that connected elites profited from the suffering. At times, it seemed as though the ultimate goal of the warring parties—at least the well-connected war profiteers—was to extend the conflict rather than bring it to an end. A stalemate settled in as the besiegers supplied the besieged and sustained the war through trade with the enemy.[38] "Bosnia's own Muslim warlords controlled the entire economy of the city, trading with the Serb besiegers and then squeezing every last penny out of their compatriots by ratcheting up the price of basic foodstuff, many of which were stolen from the United Nations and other humanitarian organizations," according to Glenny.[39]

The intersection between what Peter Andreas has called the business of war and the business of crime resulted in a form of criminalized warfare in which quasi-private criminal combatants served as thugs for hire. Indeed, many of the militia and paramilitary formations fighting each other were nothing more than "small groups of politically empowered thugs" who were largely "drawn from the ranks of soccer hooligans, criminal gangs, and released prisoners."[40] They were essentially criminals for hire who were willing to kill as long as they received adequate remuneration for their services.

Nowhere was the shadow economy more evident than in the popularity of what came to be called the Arizona market. Constructed as an open-air bazaar in 1996 with the intent of revitalizing trade and the local economy in the Brcko district of northeastern Bosnia, the Arizona Market soon morphed into an outpost of illegal activity. Four years after it opened, the market housed 2,000 shacks spread over 35 acres near the headquarters of 4,000 peacekeeping troops.[41] Each weekend, 25,000 people visited the market, which brought income to approximately 20,000 residents in the region.

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[38] Andreas, 2004, pp. 38–41.

[39] Glenny, 2008, p. 33.

[40] Andreas, 2004, p. 32.

[41] Peter Andreas, *Blue Helmets and Black Markets: The Business of Survival in the Siege of Sarajevo*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2008, pp. 135–137.

As the laws of supply and demand took root, the Arizona Market served as a hub for human smuggling (illegal migrants and prostitutes were trafficked from Moldova, Ukraine, Romania, and other nearby Eastern Bloc nations) and every other imaginable illicit vice. Each year, the Bosnian state lost out on an estimated $30 million in tax revenues that could have been used to help rebuild the shattered nation.[42] Instead, profits from contraband trade were either pocketed for personal gain or funneled back into nationalist causes, which had the opposite of the intended effect of fostering ethnic integration.

Few could fault the desperate participants from engaging in this form of unregulated commerce. The transition from socialism to the most unbridled form of capitalism imaginable, ungoverned by rules or regulations, provided the kinds of economic opportunities once only afforded to the *nomenklatura*, and even that happened in secret and on a much smaller scale. The Arizona Market was a mere microcosm of the illicit economic trade occurring every day throughout the Balkans and helped contribute to a legacy of laissez-faire that would outlive the war itself, further complicating postconflict efforts to restore a semblance of order and rule of law to Bosnia and its environs.

Smuggling and Trafficking[43]
Drugs

Just as it had in the former Soviet Union, communism in Josip Broz Tito's Yugoslavia led to the establishment of an underground economy, predicated on the foundational laws and principles that governed economics and trade. The mafia that emerged to meet the needs of that demand also capitalized on Yugoslavia's geography as a bridge between East and West. "The Balkan Route" stretches from Afghanistan and Iran through Turkey-Bulgaria-Yugoslavia-Hungary, or from Albania to

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[42] Andreas, 2008, pp. 135–137.

[43] The literature on transnational organized crime often uses the terms *smuggling* and *trafficking* interchangeably, except for human trafficking and human smuggling: The former is a crime against a person, and the latter is a crime against the state. For the sake of clarity and precision, this research proceeds from the notion that smuggling is about crossing borders while trafficking refers to the broader process of moving illicit goods. We are grateful to Phil Williams for this observation.

Western Europe.[44] Eighty percent of the heroin seized (the equivalent of $540 million) comes through some iteration of this route. Just as they do along the route from Colombia through Central America and on to Mexico, drug traffickers in the Balkans break up larger shipments into more manageable loads and store the narcotics in depots, or strategic warehouses, throughout Eastern and Southeastern Europe.[45]

Under Tito, the Serbian mafia dominated Yugoslavia's heroin trade. Drug trafficking in the Balkans is estimated to earn criminal groups approximately $7 billion per year as drugs make their way from South Asia (with the lion's share of opium originating in Afghanistan) through the Balkans and on to Western Europe, transported by trucks, cars, speedboats, and large ships.[46] Within the Balkans, Albania is a commonly used strategic location, with cocaine, heroin, marijuana, and hashish moving through that country and on to Italy and Greece.[47] Many Albanian criminals have ties to other powerful criminal syndicates, including the Italian mafia.[48] Croatia also sees heavy drug traffic and has earned a reputation for being a "smuggler's paradise," largely due to its 1,000-km coastline and more than 1,000 small islands.[49]

Throughout the conflict in Bosnia, soldiers from the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) were known to engage in drug trafficking with the help of the Sarajevo mafia.[50] Ukrainian soldiers were among the worst. Reporting suggests that Ukrainian UNPROFOR soldiers imported heroin into Bosnia in UN vehicles.[51]

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[44] Esther Bacon, "Balkan Trafficking in Historical Perspective," in Kimberley L. Thachuk, *Transnational Threats: Smuggling and Trafficking in Arms, Drugs, and Human Life*, Westport, Conn.: Praeger Security International, 2007, p. 92.

[45] Thomas Köppel and Agnes Székely, "Transnational Organized Crime and Conflict in the Balkans," in Mats Berdal and Mónica Serrano, eds., *Transnational Organized Crime and International Security: Business as Usual?* Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 2002, p. 132.

[46] Bacon, 2007, p. 81.

[47] Bacon, 2007, p. 84.

[48] Köppel and Székely, 2002, p. 132.

[49] Bacon, 2007, p. 90.

[50] Andreas, 2008, p. 46.

[51] Maggie O'Kane, "A Piece of the Action," *Ottawa Citizen*, August 28, 1993.

In 1993, heroin was discovered in a shipment of sugar originating from Ancona, Italy, delivered to Bosnia via airlift by personnel deployed by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).[52]

Arms

Unsurprisingly, the Balkans became a top destination for smuggled weapons during the wars that ravaged the region in the 1990s, especially after an arms embargo made the sale of weapons to those fighting for survival an extremely lucrative undertaking. At the start of the war in Bosnia, Serbian forces were 100,000 strong and retained an arsenal of 400 heavy artillery pieces, 48 multiple-rocket launchers, 350 120-mm mortars, 250 armored personnel carrier and infantry fighting vehicles, 120 fighter-bombers, 500 tanks, and 80 light-attack and observation helicopters.[53] To even the playing field, the Croats and Bosniaks were in dire need of weapons. According to estimates by the Italian police, 13,500 tons of arms passed through Italy for sale in the Balkans, with many of these weapons diverted to the Croatian Army for use against the Serbs.[54]

Once a clearinghouse for trafficked weapons during the Iran-Iraq War (1980–1988), old networks in the Balkans were reinvigorated in an attempt to satisfy market shortages.[55] Smuggled weapons included assault rifles, machine guns, small-arms rounds, anti-tank weapons and rounds, mortar rounds, grenades, land mines, and an array of equipment, from boots to medical supplies and flak jackets.[56] Weapons and ammunition were smuggled into the region by both traditional means, such as tunnels, and more ingenious methods, including empty

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[52] Andreas, 2008, p. 55.

[53] Nation, 2003.

[54] Bacon, 2007, p. 81.

[55] Bacon, 2007, p. 80.

[56] Alissa J. Rubin, "U.S. Patrols Smuggling Routes to Macedonia: Balkans: American Peacekeepers in Kosovo Intercept Weapons on Way to Rebels," *Los Angeles Times*, August 20, 2001.

metal cylinders of oxygen and in the false bottoms of humanitarian aid containers.[57]

Some of the most effective weapons used in the war were Chinese-made anti-tank launchers, known as Red Arrows, which were sent from Pakistan and were shuttled across the tarmac at Sarajevo's main airport disguised as wounded soldiers and covered corpses.[58] The Third World Relief Agency was a relief organization that doubled as a front for an international arms-smuggling operation. Money from Iran, Sudan, and Saudi Arabia was used to purchase weapons on the international arms market, which were then smuggled into Bosnia.[59] In the war in Kosovo, rebels relied less on surreptitious means of acquiring arms and more on direct action. In the spring of 1997, fighters from the Kosovo Liberation Army received an influx of weaponry from Albanian arms depots that were raided after the collapse of the Albanian government.

"The Balkan Route"

The Balkans is a preferred route for smugglers of all sorts. In addition to drugs and guns, traffickers and smugglers traversing the Balkan Route carry everything from people to cigarettes and driving stolen automobiles across borders. Indeed, the region serves as a "major human cargo transshipment point" for migrants and women smuggled into Europe, including many from Iran.[60] In the 1990s, Montenegro was a key player in a multibillion-dollar untaxed cigarette smuggling ring stretching across the Middle East, Central Asia, the Maghreb, the Balkans, and Western Europe.[61] Private security firms staffed by "thicknecks" and assorted thugs stole and sold automobiles with ruthless efficiency. Some of these vehicles could be located with the help of these same firms for a modest fee.

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[57] Andreas, 2008, pp. 54–55.

[58] Andreas, 2008, p. 54.

[59] John Pomfret, "How Bosnia's Muslims Dodged Arms Embargo," *Washington Post*, September 22, 1996.

[60] Andreas, 2004, pp. 46–47.

[61] Glenny, 2008, p. 23.

Money laundering helped criminals and the political elite disguise their ill-gotten gains. Sometimes, money was laundered through banks, as in Mostar by Hercegovačka Banka.[62] Other times, laundered funds in the Balkans were reportedly linked to Colombian drug traffickers.[63] As Andreas has noted, "War is a continuation of business by clandestine means: Military success often hinges on entrepreneurial success in the murky underworld of smuggling."[64] This "murky underworld of smuggling" turned gang leaders into power brokers able to liaise with political elites to maximize the consolidation of resources. Organized crime fused with nationalist political aspirations. With local mafias indistinguishable from political leaders, a malignant civil society took root and attenuated the power of already weak states, in some cases leading to outright state failure.

State Failure and Weak Governance

At the height of the conflict, Bosnia and other parts of the former Yugoslavia were set ablaze by ancient hatreds and kept in such a state through weak governance, nationalist politics, and rampant corruption. These problems overlapped and fed a mutually reinforcing cycle in which state-sanctioned corruption alienated the region's populations, which, in turn, sought protection and welfare from nationalist leaders and sectarian political parties, further sharpening the cleavage between the opposing ethnic groups.

Corruption

Corruption in Bosnia took many forms and ranged in severity, but it always furthered the delegitimization of the state. The ubiquity of corruption blurred the line between licit and illicit political and economic spaces, and most activities and transactions occurred in a gray, quasi-legal space. The legacy of socialism and the upheaval caused by war

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[62] James Dobbins, Seth G. Jones, Keith Crane, Christopher S. Chivvis, Andrew Radin, F. Stephen Larrabee, Nora Bensahel, Brooke Stearns Lawson, and Benjamin W. Goldsmith, *Europe's Role in Nation Building: From the Balkans to the Congo*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MG-722-RC, 2008, p. 149.

[63] Glenny, 2008, p. 25.

[64] Andreas, 2004, p. 30.

facilitated entrenched political corruption while baptizing the criminal elite as the *nouveau riche* and allowing the old *nomenklatura* to inherit the reins of power.[65]

Bribes, kickbacks, and payoffs became "business as usual." The barriers to entry in the marketplace ranged from tax assessment to import/export licenses.[66] The new system was clearly "pay for play," and the cost to play was high. Neither merit nor money could guarantee access. Political connections became a prerequisite to commercial success. Nepotism, clientelism, and rent seeking contributed to the hollowing out of the state's capacity, and special interests meant the supremacy of mafia dons, not lobbyists.[67] Just as in Mexico, when corrupt officials or police were prosecuted or fired, there was an endless supply of others ready to step in and continue the legacy.

The privatization and deregulation process was considered an opportunity for politically connected power brokers to hoard potentially lucrative state assets. Poor governance and a weak regulatory environment cost the states in the region a significant amount of revenue. Spotty and inconsistent enforcement only encouraged a culture of smuggling and tax evasion. Border control and the collection of customs duties were usurped by the obvious incentives to eschew one's duties by participating in the clandestine economy.

This clandestine economy remained an impediment to the creation of functioning state institutions. Money siphoned from government accounts or made on the black market was funneled back into supporting various nationalist parties. These parties demonstrated blatant favoritism toward their co-ethnics, which nearly rendered useless a cumbersome bureaucracy that was too often utilized in the pursuit of private gain. The high levels of corruption in the government, combined with the concomitant effects of eroding legitimacy, merely fed patronage politics.

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[65] Andreas, 2004, p. 44.

[66] Donais, 2003, p. 367.

[67] Moisés Naím, "Mafia States: Organized Crime Takes Office," *Foreign Affairs*, May–June 2012, p. 100.

Patronage Politics

The political situation in Bosnia was constantly in flux. Each side jostled for power as the Bosnian Croats and the Croatian Democratic Union, the Bosnian Muslims and the Party for Democratic Action, and the Serb Democratic Party formed what were effectively fiefdoms, governed by warlords who engaged in influence peddling and other neofeudal behaviors.[68] Power rested at the level of individual cantons and municipalities, with local and regional power brokers empowered with the ability to allocate the relatively few jobs available, cementing their authority and appeal within their constituency. When strongmen and their gangs refused to integrate into the political system in the aftermath of the conflict, this posed a direct threat to government authority, which had been supplanted by a system of quasi-governance and patronage.

Patronage networks remained a major threat to the stability of Bosnian government institutions, especially in the phase immediately following the war. The post-Dayton democratization and marketization process left many unsure of the "rules of the game." Rather than waiting around to find out, a small cadre of gangsters-turned-politicians made their own rules to consolidate economic, social, and political power. According to Dobbins et al., "The postwar political system, especially the nationalist (that is to say, ethnically based) parties that were born from the wartime political-military power structures, thus became inextricably intertwined with organized criminal networks, complicating the process of political reform."[69]

With patronage networks firmly entrenched throughout the region, government bureaucracies remained highly inefficient, with overlapping layers creating redundancy and sectarian appointments

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[68] Donais, 2003, p. 364.

[69] James Dobbins, Laurel E. Miller, Stephanie Pezard, Christopher S. Chivvis, Julie E. Taylor, Keith Crane, Calin Trenkov-Wermuth, and Tewodaj Mengistu, *Overcoming Obstacles to Peace: Local Factors in Nation-Building*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-167-CC, 2013, p. 100.

leading to a bloated and politicized body politic. At one point, Bosnia hosted an astounding 14 separate parliaments and 200 ministers.[70]

What Was Done to Improve the Situation?

The effort to piece Bosnia back together was a multiyear, multi-organization commitment that cost the West billions of dollars in political, economic, and security assistance. To be sure, this comprehensive approach to nation-building was one of the most extensive and expensive postconflict stability operation in recent history. The international community, to include the United States, the European Union, the UN, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), and Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

In December 1995, formerly warring parties signed the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, also known as the Dayton Accords, which laid out the terms for peace in the war-torn Balkans while providing a roadmap for a return to normalcy. Seeking to succeed where the Vance-Owen plan had failed several years earlier,[71] the Serbs had grown weary of continued conflict. Western military intervention had convinced Milošević to quit while he could, but it could do little to sort out political realities in the immediate aftermath of the war. Indeed, as Christopher Chivvis has remarked, "The ensuing peace was correspondingly tenuous, especially given that the political factions that had driven the conflict on all sides were not eliminated and would continue to pursue their war aims in peacetime."[72]

Coordinating and implementing the civilian aspects of Dayton proved to be one of the most significant obstacles of the agreement.[73] The Western intervention in the Balkans was a "highly disjointed

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[70] Dobbins, Jones, Crane, Chivvis, et al., 2008, p. 146.

[71] The Vance-Owen plan called for the division of Bosnia into ten semiautonomous regions and received the backing of the UN, though it was defeated by the majority of those who voted in the referendum.

[72] Christopher S. Chivvis, "The Dayton Dilemma," *Survival*, Vol. 52, No. 5, 2010, p. 49.

[73] Dobbins, McGinn, et al., 2003, p. 94.

international effort from the outset," though it would ultimately prove successful.[74] Other challenges included high levels of violence against refugees returning to their erstwhile homelands, now reconstituted by their internecine enemies. Ethnic minorities returned to a changed landscape, one in which the cohabitation of different groups was unsustainable.

The intervention of international organizations and national governments in support of stability in Croatia, Bosnia, and Kosovo included a robust security component (see Table 3.1). In Croatia, the UN assisted through UNPROFOR and the United States trained Croat soldiers in military strategy and tactics. Hard-fought security gains were not without setbacks, however.

NATO initiated a bombing campaign against the Serb leadership during the wars in Bosnia and Kosovo. One of these operations was Operation Deliberate Force, an effort to deter repeated attacks on UN-sponsored safe areas.[75] The operation lasted for several weeks. All told, 3,515 sorties were flown against 338 targets.

The kinetic details of these cases have been richly detailed in historical case studies.[76] Still less understood is the strategy employed throughout the region in response to the anarchic conditions that stalked these countries.

Security-sector reform and postconflict policing are some of the most difficult endeavors undertaken by members of the international community. The United States focused its postconflict energies on military reform, prosecuting war criminals, fostering the rule of law, and implementing financial reforms.[77] In Kosovo, through Operation Joint

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[74] Dobbins, McGinn, et al., 2003, p. 101.

[75] For further reading on the massacre at Srebrenica, see Edgar O'Ballance, *Civil War in Bosnia: 1992–94*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1995, pp. 158–161.

[76] For more, see Christopher Paul, Colin P. Clarke, and Beth Grill, *Victory Has a Thousand Fathers: Detailed Counterinsurgency Case Studies*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MG-964/1-OSD, 2010.

[77] Dobbins, Jones, Crane, Chivvis, et al., 2008, p. 157.

Table 3.1
Selected International Forces That Deployed to the Balkans

Organization	Duties and Tasks
UN Civilian Police	1,721-member operation authorized by the UN Security Council in 1995[a]
UN International Police Task Force	Mandated to monitor, advise, and train Bosnian police
UNPROFOR	First UN peacekeeping force deployed to the former Yugoslavia; initially numbered 1,500 but increased to 38,000; operated under strict rules of engagement; restructured into UN Preventive Deployment Force and UN Confidence Restoration Operation
NATO Implementation Force	60,000-strong NATO-led peacekeeping force; deployed to relieve UNPROFOR
NATO Stabilization Force	Backfilled NATO Implementation Force; 32,000 troops by 1998; focused on improving civil-military relations; tasked with restoring basic services, facilitating economic reconstruction, and enforcing the tenets of the Dayton Accords
NATO Kosovo Force	NATO-led peacekeeping force deployed in 1999; conducted Operation Joint Guardian
Peace Implementation Council	Created by the London Conference in 2000; delegated NATO authority to promote the creation of a joint, national-level military in Bosnia and Herzegovina[b]
European Union Force Althea	Took over from NATO in December 2004; largest EU military operation to date; 6,300 troops across the northwest (British), north (Finnish), and southeast (Spanish); "provided a secure environment in Bosnia by conducting patrols, monitoring the situation on the ground, raiding arms caches, and deterring major breaches of the accord."[c]
European Union Police Mission	Played mentoring, monitoring, and inspection role; restructured the force; fought organized crime[d]

[a] Dobbins, McGinn, et al., 2003, p. 93.
[b] Dobbins, Jones, Crane, Chivvis, et al., 2008, p. 143.
[c] Dobbins, Jones, Crane, Chivvis, et al., 2008, p. 152.
[d] Dobbins, Jones, Crane, Chivvis, et al., 2008, p. 151.

Guardian, the United States maintained responsibility for the demarcation and monitoring the zone of separation.[78]

Europe, which shouldered the largest share of the postconflict burden, charted out a three-pronged strategy for police reform:[79]

- The national government would have exclusive control over the police.
- There would be no political interference.
- The force's organization would be based on technical capacity, not politics.

The postconflict phase of the intervention relied on mutually supporting lines of operation, including security, political and governance strategies, and efforts aimed at piecing back together a society shattered by heinous violence. Even with such a manpower-intensive effort devoted to such projects as training local police forces, setbacks were abundant. For example, a 2003 study determined that Bosnia's multiple ethnic police forces were "excessively expensive and inefficient."[80] Festering problems cast a shadow of doubt on whether the police forces would ever be able to reintegrate into society at large. To head off similar issues with the national militaries, Paddy Ashdown, then the UN's High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, created a new defense reform commission in July 2004.

In the political realm, Dayton created two highly decentralized entities, the Serb-majority Republika Srpska and the Bosniak and Croat Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina under a weak national government. Many of the most urgent needs of the various Balkan governments were, in fact, political rather than economic or security-related.[81] The weak constitutional authority of the national governments kept nationalist leaders and local power brokers in positions of authority, both formal and informal. Even where results were positive,

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[78] Dobbins, McGinn, et al., 2003, p. 96.

[79] Dobbins, Jones, Crane, Chivvis, et al., 2008, pp. 159–160.

[80] Dobbins, Jones, Crane, Chivvis, et al., 2008, p. 143.

[81] Dobbins, Jones, Crane, Chivvis, et al., 2008, p. 170.

expectations remained tempered. The first national elections in 1996 returned wartime leaders to office, and the next seven elections, though judged to be "free and fair," saw voting break down along ethnic lines.

Patching up societal rifts, considered the least sexy of the post-conflict do-outs, was perhaps the most important strategy for ensuring the region's long-term stability. UNHCR assumed responsibility for the return of refugees and internally displaced persons, demining, and restoring basic humanitarian services, such as sanitation, water, and electricity.[82] The UN's Office of the High Representative worked on political stability and reform, while OSCE focused on such issues as education and democracy. The refugee situation improved as a result of coordination among the NATO Stabilization Force, the UN Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, OSCE, and UNHCR.[83]

Reintegrating ex-combatants into society was another holistic effort, though some of the most labor-intensive initiatives were led by the World Bank. Once the war in Bosnia ended, the World Bank's International Development Agency initiated the Emergency Demobilization and Reintegration Project, which directed targeted assistance primarily toward ex-soldiers but also refugees, war victims (including war widows), disabled persons, and scores of unemployed citizens.[84] The program assisted 23,323 beneficiaries and achieved a relatively high placement rate of 74 percent. It also successfully promoted cross-entity communication and raised the profile of job counseling and on-the-job training as possible avenues for entering the Bosnian labor market.[85]

Another World Bank initiative was the Pilot Emergency Labor Redeployment Project (PELRP), which began in December 2000 and lasted through September 2004. The PELRP maintained a budget of

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[82] Dobbins, McGinn, et al., 2003, p. 98.

[83] Dobbins, McGinn, et al., 2003, p. 99.

[84] World Bank, *Technical Annex: Bosnia and Herzegovina Emergency Demobilization and Reintegration Project*, Washington, D.C., June 28, 1996, p. 3.

[85] Jessica Alexander, Jennifer DePiazza, Augustine Flory, Alan Moseley, Amra Sabic-El-Rayess, Regina Reza, and Samuel Rikkers, *From Barracks to Business: An Evaluation of IOM's Transitional Assistance Program to Former Soldiers in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, New York: School of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University, April 2004, p. 30.

$15 million and targeted soldiers discharged in 1999 and 2000 under the terms of the Madrid Agreement. In essence, the PELRP aimed to provide ex-soldiers with the necessary means to achieve self-sufficiency while also attempting to integrate them into the Bosnian economy. An ancillary objective of the PELRP was to test different labor market measures that encouraged employment generation and small-business creation for the benefit of demobilized soldiers and local training and consultancy firms. The project's four components were on-the-job training and employment, self-employment in agriculture, self-employment in small-scale business, and institutional education and training.

The PELRP could count three main successes. First, by mid-2003, the program had assisted between 45 and 50 percent of eligible beneficiaries, a laudable effort to be sure. Second, it helped catalyze much-needed institutional reform of the Bosnian employment bureaus. Third, in accordance with one of its overarching objectives, the PELRP successfully promoted the notion of self-reliance among reintegrated populations.[86]

The International Organization for Migration launched its Transitional Assistance to Former Soldiers in Bosnia and Herzegovina program in April 2002 with an operating budget of $11 million (average per capita costs were between $700 and $800). The program's target group was soldiers discharged between January and May 2002 following the agreement of the Joint Military Commission. The program was created to assist reintegrees in establishing financial independence and smooth their transition into the civilian economy. To accomplish this, the International Organization for Migration created a database of discharged soldiers, created personalized profiles for them, provided information and counseling about what opportunities existed for them upon reintegrating, helped them highlight the skills thought to be attractive to potential employers, and offered trade and agricultural toolkits that could help them achieve sustainable employment.

The program successfully collected contact information on demobilized soldiers while they were still in their barracks. It also involved a high degree of cooperation between the ministries of defense and

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[86] Alexander et al., 2004, p. 30.

army garrisons. Finally, it successfully promoted sustainable employment with a civic education component.

How Did It End Up?

Throughout the Balkans, from Sarajevo to Belgrade and from Pristina to Zagreb, progress was slow, at times uncertain, and costly. To save the southeastern edge of the continent, the European Union (with help from the international community) "doubled down on the Balkans" in an impressive commitment of blood and treasure. Improvements in security, governance, and the economy are evident today, though there is little doubt that many serious challenges remain. Future stability is not guaranteed, but a return to war is unlikely. However, recent progress is considered tenuous. Nothing in this region is a *fait accompli*.

Between 2002 and 2003, violent incidents fell from 277 to 135.[87] As violence waned, so too did the number of security forces needed to deal with instability. Troop levels for stability operations dropped from 60,000 in 1996 to 7,000 by 2004.[88] Even the outbreak of violence following Kosovo's 2008 declaration of independence remained contained and limited. Success in providing security became evident in the drop in violence coupled with the improvement of the economy.

To keep the region from unraveling at the seams, the international community pledged a herculean response. Economic development policies led to the implementation of numerous infrastructure projects, such as roads, bridges, and housing (much of which had been destroyed during the war). The World Bank and the IMF successfully rebuilt and fortified economic institutions. Tax rates were unified and tariffs reduced in an attempt to resuscitate the economy. These strategies were effective, leading to plummeting inflation, steady growth, and robust economic recovery, exemplified by a threefold increase in power purchasing parity.[89] International financial institutions and the UN's Office of the High Representative helped establish a unified tax and customs administration and a currency board, while bullish growth

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[87] Dobbins, Jones, Crane, Chivvis, et al., 2008, p. 143.

[88] Dobbins, Jones, Crane, Chivvis, et al., 2008, p. 142.

[89] Dobbins, Jones, Crane, Chivvis, et al., 2008, p. 148.

rates led the countries to rely less on foreign assistance over time. Consistent economic production buttressed government reforms. According to Dobbins et al., "Bosnia remained stable; enjoyed strong, steady economic growth; and adopted many of the provisions on improving its government that the European Union encouraged it to adopt."[90]

Similarities and Differences Between the Balkans and Mexico

While not necessarily apparent at first blush, there are several striking similarities between the Balkans and Mexico. First, at the height of the Balkans conflict, many of those participating in the violence exalted in a culture of depravity. Second, the nature of the violence was anomic, carried out in a life-is-cheap/kill-for-thrills fashion. Finally, the Balkans became legendary for its status as a transshipment point for all things illicit. While the Balkans and Mexico share similarities in terms of the popularity and celebration of certain malevolent actors, the nature of the violence plaguing both countries, and the use of territory as a transshipment point for a range of illicit goods, there are significant differences between them as well. These differences concern the goal of the violence, the ethnic character of the conflict, and the solution required to bring an end to the death and destruction plaguing the respective territories.

Violence

In Bosnia, the militia leader Arkan was widely revered by Bosnian Serbs as a pop-culture icon who neither sang nor scored goals, though he mixed and mingled with entertainers and athletes. The celebration of violence contributed to the legend of this homicidal archcriminal gangster. Part celebrity, part warlord, Arkan was the midwife of anomie in a conflict already besieged by atrocity and mass bloodshed.

This career criminal, who achieved celebrity status throughout the Balkans, was as likely to wear designer suits as military fatigues

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[90] Dobbins, Jones, Crane, Chivvis, et al., 2008, p. 155.

and married the beautiful pop singer Ceca. Arkan even inserted himself into the politics of football (soccer) in southern Europe. His legend grew to mythical proportions, on par with crime lord demigods like Pablo Escobar or Joaquín Guzmán Loera ("El Chapo"). While the Balkans conflict raged in the early 1990s, Arkan played the parts of warlord, politician, and Serbian Unity Party candidate in elections.

On January 15, 2000, less than two years after being unanimously reelected chairman of the party of Serbian Unity in Kosovo, Arkan was gunned down by assassins as he held a meeting at a Belgrade hotel. This rather unceremonious end to Arkan's life became fodder for conspiracy theories. Though he was never linked directly to the crime, some speculate that Milošević ordered the hit after a falling-out with Arkan in the late 1990s. It was an ironic if not unfamiliar plotline in a war characterized by collusion and betrayal.

Indiscriminate Mayhem or "Anomic Violence"

While one could debate whether the violence reached levels of anomie in the Balkans, the details of certain events are rarely disputed. One such event is the Srebrenica massacre of July 1995, which exemplifies the nature of the violence. To this day, the Srebrenica massacre remains one of the most heinous wartime offenses of the modern era and perhaps the "single biggest crime" in a conflict characterized by myriad atrocities.[91] In an act of "unimaginable savagery," thousands of Bosnian Muslims, most of them men and boys, were shot execution-style and buried in mass graves (some while still alive). Entire families were mutilated and slaughtered, while reports surfaced of a grandfather forced by Serb terrorists to eat the liver of his dead grandson.[92]

The sheer magnitude of the crimes was (and still is) astonishing. Many of the victims at Srebrenica were blindfolded, had their hands bound behind their backs, and were summarily executed with a gunshot to the back of the head. The town had been declared a "safe area" by the UN; obviously, it was anything but. Serb militias killed, raped, and pillaged with impunity as they sought to depopulate the territory

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[91] Glenny, 2008, p. 650.

[92] Cigar and Williams, 2002, pp. 179–180.

through any means necessary. The indiscriminate mayhem in the Balkans differs from that in Mexico on several levels: In the Balkans, the violence occurred during all-out war, the different ethnicities of the belligerents from the former Yugoslavia gave the violence a sectarian feel, and anomie in the Balkans did not occur against a backdrop of narcotic-related crime and violence.

Traditional Threat/Insurgency

In Slovenia and shortly thereafter in Croatia, Bosnia, and eventually Kosovo, the violence in the Balkans was initially political in nature, aimed at liberating nations rather than strictly earning profits, as in Mexico. At the same time, Milošević orchestrated much of this violence to consolidate his power at home and achieve his goal of a "Greater Serbia." However, over time, these conflicts developed a substantial criminal element whose primary motivation was making money. Even so, much of the money earned by these criminal organizations was funneled back into political causes, whether insurgent organizations or mafia-like patronage networks. In sum, the goal was to control the state, not simply to control the smuggling corridors. In Mexico, the threat comes not from an insurgency seeking to control the state but from VDTOs willing to resort to any means necessary to consolidate control over the narcotics trade.

Ethnically Motivated Violence

Another major difference between the Balkans and Mexico is that violence in the Balkans reached the level of genocide. To be sure, this act of "cleansing" was in line with the Serbs' wartime objectives of creating a geographically contiguous and ethnically pure territory along the Drina.[93] The slaughter and displacement of Muslims was the very purpose of the attacks. That it was done in such a degrading fashion only added to the power dynamic at play.[94] Exactly how so many people thought this was the right thing to do remains difficult to comprehend. Moralizing aside, this was a massacre of civilians and a deliberate

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[93] Cigar and Williams, 2002, p. 184.

[94] Cigar and Williams, 2002, p. 188.

campaign of mass murder. For reasons totally different from those that motivate violence in Mexico, the genocide perpetrated throughout the Balkans was an attempt to cleanse entire populations.

Lack of Economic Opportunities

A lack of economic opportunities in both Mexico and the Balkans was partly responsible for the rise of "criminal entrepreneurs" who seek to carve out their own fiefdoms in illicit economies. In the Balkans, both the licit and illicit economies were intimately linked to organized crime and political violence. As crime became endemic, powerful syndicates grew from parochial smuggling franchises into vast smuggling empires, extending these networks along a well-tread route, the "multilane criminal highway" sometimes referred to as the New Silk Route linking illicit markets in Europe and Asia.[95] These entrenched criminal networks pursued a diverse range of illegal activities, including drug smuggling, looting and theft, kidnapping for ransom, widespread extortion, and the smuggling and trafficking of narcotics, arms, people, cigarettes, and automobiles.

Weapon Availability

Weapons were readily available in the Balkans due in large part to the reactivation of an illicit arms network that had been established during the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s.[96] Even when the former Yugoslavia was facing an arms embargo, Italian police estimated that more than 13,500 tons of weapons made their way through Italy and into the hands of weapon traffickers in the Balkans.[97] Similarly to Mexico, the security forces in the Balkans were regularly outgunned by the criminals and violent traffickers they were attempting to arrest.

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[95] Glenny, 2008, p. xiv.

[96] Fondzaione Rosselli, *Organized Criminality Security in Europe*, working paper, Forward Studies Unit, European Commission, 1999, p. 10.

[97] Bacon, 2007, p. 81.

Competition over a Resource

Competition over a resource was never one of the factors driving the violence in the Balkans. To be sure, the desire to acquire arms and ammunition was ubiquitous, as it usually is during a conflict, but it was not the zero-sum game that narcotics trafficking can be. Control of territory and the smuggling routes passing through the region were valuable, of course, as were contacts and networks in Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. In transshipment areas like the Balkans and Mexico, control over the actual smuggling routes, rather than resources, is the ultimate prize.

Ungoverned Spaces

While ungoverned space was never a major contributor to instability in the Balkans conflict, the region as a whole did face problems across several dimensions of ungovernability, including state penetration into society, monopoly on the use of force, control over borders, and external interference. Overall, however, there are few meaningful lessons to draw from a comparison of ungoverned spaces in the Balkans and Mexico.

State/Institutional Weakness

The story of the Balkans is one of genocide but also one of intervention, followed by stabilization and progress. The notion that formerly warring parties can come together in the aftermath of unspeakable atrocities and move past a painful, shared history speaks to the resiliency of the human spirit. It also demonstrates the fortitude of countries and organizations committed to reducing violence and improving institutions. But reducing the violence required a willingness on the part of certain actors to accept such a large and enduring intervention. Other actors, such as those in Milošević's Serbia, could not be persuaded and thus had to be coerced. Mexico suffers from state weakness and institutional inefficiencies, but the magnitude of the crisis in the Balkans posed different challenges to the governments of Bosnia, Croatia, Serbia, and Kosovo.

Patronage/Corruption

Corruption and patronage in the Balkans and Mexico have interfered with political stability. In the former, "a weak institutional framework has exacerbated tendencies toward 'informal institutionalization' in the form of corruption and organized crime," according to Donais.[98] Meanwhile, in Mexico, a weak judiciary and routinized corruption are both responsible for and an ancillary result of inept institutions.

Lessons for Mexico

In many ways, the Balkans is both a poor comparison case for Mexico and a good comparison case for Mexico. It is a poor comparison case because, unlike Mexico, the Balkans featured extreme levels of ethnically motivated violence, which is absent in Mexico and, due to Mexico's demographics, not likely in the future. However, the Balkans is a good comparison case for many more reasons. Like Mexico, the Balkans were plagued by high levels of violence, anomic violence and mayhem, a widespread lack of economic opportunities, a high level of weapon availability, rampant corruption and patronage, and state and institutional weakness. Most importantly, the Balkans is a case in which the factors driving or related to violence and those related to governance and corruption improved, signaling possible positive lessons for Mexico.

While we recognize that the Mexican government is unlikely to accede to the deployment of a large contingent of peacekeeping troops on its soil, nor is it likely to receive an equivalent economic aid package, the Balkans case offers other lessons that may be instructive for Mexico. NATO gets much of the credit for ending the war in the Balkans through air power, but the situation was far more complex than how it is often retold. Military force alone is unlikely to reduce violence *and* lead to lasting stability. To cement hard-fought security gains, much of the international effort in the Balkans focused on police reform. The UN Civilian Police, the International Police Task Force, and the

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[98] Donais, 2005, p. 112.

EU Police Mission each contributed to improving policing capabilities throughout the Balkans. The EU Police Mission mentored, monitored, and advised police forces while also fighting organized crime.

External expertise in the form of police trainers could be a way for Mexico to make considerable gains in this area of institutional reform. The continued reliance on the Federal Police, coupled with a vigorous effort to build the capacity of local and state police forces, would level the playing field with the VDTOs by countering the drug gangs with better-trained, better-equipped, better-disciplined police. This process took many years in the Balkans. Accordingly, this effort is more likely to take root over an extended, gradual timeline rather than in the immediate term.

The governments in the Balkans, in tandem with assistance from the international community, pursued a two-pronged strategy for combating organized crime: prevention and repression.[99] The cornerstone of the preventive strategy was the Stability Pact for Southeastern Europe, signed in July 1999 and sponsored by OSCE. The pact worked to improve the region's social, political, and economic problems by strengthening government and legal systems and countering corruption. The repressive strategy has resulted in greater cooperation with Interpol and Europol and greater intelligence sharing among countries in the region.[100]

The collapse of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the subsequent conflict that spread throughout the Balkans points to some other important lessons for Mexico. First, criminal activity should not be considered in isolation from other forms of violent conflict. Too often, academics, scholars, and outsiders haggle over the finer points of these definitions. However, in places like the Balkans, it is rarely an "either/or" situation, as criminals can also double as insurgents, terrorists, or state-sponsored security forces. Second, corruption is not a victimless crime. It is not an inherently violent act, but that does not preclude it from having corrosive effects on society. In the Balkans, corruption was the keystone of the criminal activity that buoyed war criminals

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[99] Köppel and Székely, 2002, p. 138.

[100] Köppel and Székely, 2002, p. 138.

and continues to plague the region since the conflict. In places like the Balkans, the "bullet or the bribe" may be a false dichotomy. In short, one may be forced to pay the bribe while ultimately befallen by the bullet.

The solution to ending the wave of genocidal violence in the Balkans required a massive international effort, including air power, ground troops, logistical support, and an array of nongovernmental and civil society organizations. Unless a government is willing to welcome such an intervention, or security deteriorates to the point that an intervention on this scale is forced upon the government, the situation might just plod along in the form of a "durable disorder," in which the state remains weak but robust enough to prevent failure or outright collapse.

West Africa (1990–2010)

Case Selection Categories: Resource Insurgency, Ungoverned Spaces, High Level of Organized Crime

On Christmas Eve in 1989, Liberian warlord Charles Taylor led an invasion force of approximately 150 insurgents, fighting under the banner of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), into Nimba County in Liberia's northeast. The insurgents crossed the border into Liberia from the Ivory Coast and counted among their ranks a hodgepodge of rebels from Sierra Leone, Gambia, and Guinea, as well as an attachment of Burkinabe soldiers.[1] Taylor's foray into Nimba County marked the beginning of more than a decade of chaos and instability in West Africa, with multiple armed groups competing to control the region's vast natural resources for their own personal gain. Neighboring Sierra Leone was soon dragged into the conflict, which featured intervention by an array of actors, including private mercenaries, regional African security organizations, the UN, and the British military.

At the height of the region's violence, drug-crazed child soldiers roamed the cities and countryside, engaging in mass looting, rape, and the wanton slaughter of combatants and noncombatants alike. It was not uncommon for victims to be set on fire or beheaded, mutilated for sport, or hacked to death with machetes and then cannibalized.[2] Much of the violence had an oddly apolitical and random character.

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[1] Stephen Ellis, "Liberia's Warlord Insurgency," in Christopher Clapham, ed., *African Guerrillas*, Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1998, p. 155.

[2] J. E. Herring, "Liberia: America's Stepchild," 1997, p. 28.

The behavior of some violent nonstate actors in such countries as Sierra Leone was similar to anomic violence observed in the Balkans. Ultimately, external intervention was able to quell the violence and return the region to a baseline level of functionality.

Conflict and Violence in West Africa

The insurgency in Liberia began in 1989 and lasted until 1997, while the insurgency in Sierra Leone stretched for more than a decade, beginning in 1991 and ending only in 2002. Years of conflict and violence disrupted any semblance of normal life in the region and led to the following atrocities:[3]

- Estimates of the number killed in the West African wars of the 1990s range from tens of thousands to upwards of a half a million.
- Approximately 500,000 people were internally displaced. Of those who survived, many were amputees, an acute challenge in a largely agricultural society.
- By 1999, fewer than 10 percent of primary-school-age children were enrolled in school.[4]
- In Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone, between 65 and 80 percent of homes were destroyed; police stations, medical facilities, schools, and other critical infrastructure were also destroyed or damaged beyond repair.

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[3]   James Dobbins, Seth G. Jones, Keith Crane, Andrew Rathmell, Brett Steele, Richard Teltschick, and Anga R. Timilsina, *The UN's Role in Nation-Building: From the Congo to Iraq*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MG-304-RC, 2005, pp. 134–135.

[4]   This statistic becomes infinitely more telling in light of Collier and Hoeffler's research showing high rates of secondary-school enrollment as a major factor in reducing the risk of conflict. See Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, "Greed and Grievance in Civil War," *Oxford Economic Papers*, Vol. 56, No. 4, October 2004, p. 574.

Revolutionary United Front

The Revolutionary United Front (RUF) was formed in March 1991 and led by a former army corporal named Alfred Foday Saybana Sankoh. The initial core group of rebels consisted of an odd amalgamation of erstwhile revolutionaries, ideologues, and anti-government agitators. The RUF's predecessors and those who would account for the bulk of its forces were drawn from a subclass of Sierra Leoneans known as *lumpen* "rarray boys," perhaps most notorious for marijuana smoking, petty theft, and violence.[5] These outcasts existed beyond the perimeter of society and earned money by acting as thugs-for-hire for political parties during elections.[6] Some of the "dirty jobs" reserved for these individuals included intimidation, assault, and arson.[7] These groups were similar to the street gangs in North and South America—predatory, brutal, and typically not expecting to live to see the age of 30. Gangs in Sierra Leone strained state capacity, challenged government legitimacy, and dominated the informal economic sector. The takeaway lesson from serving in these roles was that violence pays. This conclusion inevitably led the more entrepreneurial members of such groups to begin freelancing their services, in turn spurring more violence.

The RUF's roots stretched back to Sierra Leone's culture of resistance in the 1970s, when the middle-class youth politics of reggae music merged with the continentwide consciousness of South Africa's struggle. It was during this time that the RUF's future leaders traveled abroad for military training and revolutionary indoctrination in Benghazi, Libya, under the direction of Colonel Muammar Gaddafi.[8]

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[5] *Lumpen* is a term that denotes an individual or individuals who have been dispossessed or cut off from general society or from the economic and political classes that actively participate in a country's politics.

[6] Ibrahim Abdullah and Patrick Muana, "The Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone: A Revolt of the Lumpenproletariat," in Christopher Clapham, ed., *African Guerrillas*, Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1998, p. 173.

[7] Ibrahim Abdullah, "Bush Path to Destruction: The Origin and Character of the Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 2, June 1998, p. 207.

[8] Abdullah and Muana, 1998, p. 177.

Before returning to Sierra Leone, those who would become the leadership cadre of the RUF spent time in Liberia with the notorious warlord Charles Taylor, upon whose NPFL the RUF would base its strategy and tactics.

The message espoused by the RUF's leadership was that Sierra Leone was a country blessed with vast mineral wealth, but that this wealth was controlled by Lebanese traders and a select group of political elite that the majority of the country was not a part of and never would be.[9] Decades of corruption, poor governance, and fiscal mismanagement signaled a call to action, not a time for talking. The only way to solve the country's enduring political and economic divide, the insurgents argued, was by wiping away the past and providing a fresh start through violence so savage and comprehensive that it was cleansing.

Part of the RUF's original invasion force was a contingent of NPFL "special forces" augmented by mercenaries from Burkina Faso. The foreigners among the rebels were particularly brutal, and their looting and wanton violence was seen as a "reward" or payment for their mere participation. Unlike many traditional insurgent groups, the RUF paid almost no heed to political objectives or the support of the population. On the contrary, large swaths of the civilian population had been alienated by the government of Siaka Stevens and his cronies in the All People's Congress, largely blamed for dismantling government structure while personally enriching themselves and their associates, including such Lebanese power brokers as Jamil Sahid Mohamed.[10] But rather than seeking to assuage the civilian population, the insurgents entered towns and villages and immediately slaughtered their inhabitants. Citizens left alive and identified as part of the government opposition were coerced to join the RUF.

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[9]   According to William Reno, the RUF targeted diamond traders of Lebanese ethnicity to mobilize popular support against a class of commercial outsiders, as well as to extort protection payments to finance the insurgency. See William Reno, *Warlord Politics and African States*, Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998, p. 128.

[10]   Reno, 1998, pp. 116–117.

The RUF acquired weapons either by raiding Sierra Leonean army forward supply posts or by trading diamonds with Liberian warlord Charles Taylor. The insurgents relied on a forested enclave near the Liberian border, which provided them with an ungoverned area through which to smuggle diamonds and engage in illegal logging.[11] After capturing control of the key border provinces of Kailahun and Pujehun, RUF fighters constructed training bases from which they could strike farther into the country while retaining the security of a rear staging area and place to rest, recuperate, and rearm in Liberia. As in Mexico, when violent nonstate actors are able to move into and out of the country with impunity, it is much easier to establish regional networks that will prolong the conflict.

The Internal Defence Unit was the RUF's intelligence arm, tasked with reconnaissance, target assessment, and general military intelligence, as well as communication, operational security, and the dissemination of ideological propaganda.[12] RUF ideology and political thought were not particularly well developed. The group relied on a blend of emancipatory rhetoric laced with calls for looting, banditry, and anti-government vitriol. The ideology was mere justification for action, and many of those marauding through the country needed little justification for their violence. As discussed later in this chapter, the group raised funds primarily by looting and diamond smuggling.

The group's founder, Sankoh, led the RUF with Abu Kanu and Rashid Mansaray. Sankoh held the title "head of ideology" and was considered "first among equals" and the group's official spokesman.[13] RUF combatants were grouped accordingly:[14]

- vanguards: instructors in RUF ideology; guerrilla trainers, senior battle-group commanders, and junior battle-front commanders
- special forces: "Liberians," persons or Liberian nationality but with Sierra Leonean family connections; senior RUF officers

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[11] Abdullah and Muana, 1998, p. 179.

[12] Abdullah and Muana, 1998, p. 189.

[13] Abdullah and Muana, 1998, p. 187.

[14] Abdullah and Muana, 1998, p. 188.

- *salon wosus*: foot soldiers coerced into joining but ultimately converted, trained, and provided with weapons
- standbys: captives still in training, level of competency and loyalty undetermined
- recruits: newly enlisted individuals.

Other than "blood diamonds," which have been popularized in print and on screen, the most salient and memorable characteristic of the West African civil wars of the 1990s was the sheer magnitude and barbarity of the violence. RUF fighters, many fueled by a combination of marijuana and amphetamines, set upon civilians with a ferocity that was truly carnal in nature. During the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone, anarchy reigned and lawlessness prevailed. Life was worth little as mayhem replaced any semblance of order.

At the height of the conflict, it was violence for the sake of violence.[15] Insurgent groups took hostages, mutilated civilians, and engaged in other terrorist tactics. For "fun," some fighters placed wagers on the sex of an unborn baby before cutting open the mother's womb to determine who won the bet.[16] Belief in black magic and a range of animist practices led some fighters to cannibalism. In Mexico, VDTOs have decapitated innocent civilians *just because*. In West Africa, rebels were known to eat the flesh and drink the blood of their victims while saving the heart (thought to have special powers) for dessert. Both examples reflect the erosion of societal norms and the perversion of humanity.

The insurgents' other tactics included intimidation, brutality, and indiscriminate and random violence, which convinced the population that they could be victims at any time and prompted deep feelings of terror. In some cases, the insurgents wrote threatening letters to village chiefs (similar to the Taliban's night letters used to intimidate Afghan voters). Elsewhere, villagers were gathered together, beaten,

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[15] An eyewitness to the war in Liberia noted, "The problem with many young fighters is that they have become addicted to blood and violence" (Bayo Ogunleye, *Behind Rebel Lines: Anatomy of Charles Taylor's Hostage Camps*, Enugu, Nigeria: Delta Publications, 1995, p. 137).

[16] "Foday Sankoh," *The Economist*, August 7, 2003.

tortured, and then summarily executed. Some were singled out for special punishment. For example, after beheading them with a machete, insurgents would carve "RUF" into villagers' skin or amputate their hands, ears, fingers, or genitals.[17] The RUF executed its own members for "technical sabotage" or failure to defend a position, which was not uncommon. RUF fighters were tattooed so that desertion was less of an option; if found by other RUF members, they would be killed and if found by the Sierra Leonean army, they were also killed. Abused villagers showed little mercy as well.[18]

Before long, in addition to the panoply of medieval torture techniques described here, the insurgents became known for three acts of violence in particular: *tabay*, *halaka*, and "necklacing." *Tabay* meant tying a victim's hands with wet rope so tightly behind his or her back that the result was permanent shoulder and arm damage and disfiguration. *Halaka* meant that a victim would be stripped naked, hogtied, and beaten from head to toe. And, finally, "necklacing," popularized in South Africa during the era of anti-apartheid violence in that country and now a mainstay of violence throughout West Africa, meant that a victim was bound, doused with a flammable liquid, and immolated with a burning tire placed around the neck like a necklace.

West Side Boys

In further proof of the bizarre and anarchic nature of the violence in West Africa throughout the 1990s, the West Side Boys stand above the rest. This group was more of a gang and less of an insurgent organization. It took its name from lyrics to the song "Hit 'Em Up," by the American rapper Tupac Shakur, whose image was emblazoned on shirts worn by some of the group's members.[19] Other favorite garb included wigs, women's clothes, basketball jerseys, and clothes with Disney characters on them.

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[17] Abdullah and Muana, 1998, p. 190.

[18] Abdullah and Muana, 1998, pp. 180–187.

[19] Mats Utas and Magnus Jörgel, "The West Side Boys: Military Navigation in the Sierra Leone Civil War," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 46, No. 3, 2008, pp. 492–493.

The West Side Boys set up checkpoints in Masiaka and other parts of the country under the guise of "tax collection." They stopped, robbed, beat, and randomly killed those seeking to pass through. The group was not affiliated with the RUF or the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council directly, although its ranks were made up of a motley crew of former Sierra Leonean soldiers, RUF defectors, escaped prisoners, criminals, and wannabes enamored with the "gangster" culture.

In West Africa during the 1990s, according to William Reno, the connection between a roving gang of drunken bandits and American hip hop artists like Tupac and Biggie (also known as The Notorious B.I.G. or Biggie Smalls) was "not 'anti-system'" but had a cultural appeal in which "youth admire two enterprising and clever alleged drug dealers who used violence to make a lot of money."[20] Its members went by names like "Brigadier Bomb Blast" and "Captain Cambodia" and were known for being intoxicated more often than they were awake.[21]

Animist beliefs about the power of spirits contributed to some of the more unorthodox warfighting styles witnessed throughout the region. Some fighters believed in *juju* spirits and as such, or that having a naked woman lead them into battle while walking backward and looking in a mirror (which made her invisible) would allow her to bury charms near the opposing group's position, thus improving the rebels' chances of victory.[22] As in West Africa, in Mexico, gangs similar to the West Side Boys are often important partners of the VDTOs, who subcontract them for specific low-level tasks, such as drug distribution and unstructured violence.

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[20] William Reno, "Sierra Leone: Warfare in a Post-State Society," in Robert I. Rotberg, ed., *State Failure and State Weakness in a Time of Terror*, Cambridge, Mass., and Washington, D.C.: World Peace Foundation and Brookings Institution Press, 2003, p. 91.

[21] "Who Are the West Side Boys?" BBC News, August 31, 2000. Such bizarre names were also popular in Liberia, which is perhaps how they became popular in Sierra Leone. Teenage commanders in Liberia called themselves, with youthful alacrity, everything from General Butt Naked to Major Trouble to Commander Juju. William Reno, "Clandestine Economies, Violence and States in Africa," *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 53, No. 2, Spring 2000b, p. 451.

[22] Robert D. Kaplan, *The Coming Anarchy: Shattering the Dreams of the Post Cold War*, New York: Vintage, 2002, p. 6.

Explaining the Outbreak of Violence

While scholars have identified no single factor that tipped West Africa into anarchy in the 1990s, it is clear that several related and overlapping issues made important contributions to laying the fertile ground from which much of the violence spawned. Some of these factors include

- a population divided among several ethnic and social groups, limiting a sense of national identity[23]
- disenchantment with a corrupt and ineffective government responsible for the maladministration of the state, which led to a "malaise of economic and political exclusion"[24]
- greed and a desire to control the region's valuable commodities (e.g., timber, diamonds), which was a major reason that Charles Taylor and his NPFL initiated their campaign of violence
- the disintegration of family and community cohesion—while not necessarily responsible for sparking the violence—absolutely helped sustain it[25]
- the narrowing of available choices (educational and economic opportunities) and survival strategies throughout West Africa, which led to protracted social spaces for young people to grow and achieve (a situation similar to the opportunity structure in Mexico)[26]
- geography, particularly proximity to neighboring Liberia, which brought spillover violence to Sierra Leone[27]

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[23] Dobbins, Miller, et al., 2013, p. 154.

[24] Abdullah and Muana, 1998, p. 178. Some scholars assert that corruption was the most important factor leading to the outbreak of war. See Reno, 1998, pp. 113–146.

[25] For example, some of the rebel groups initiated child soldiers by forcing them to kill their own parents.

[26] Kwesi Aning, "Understanding the Character and Politics of the Revolutionary United Front in Sierra Leone," in Klejda Mulaj, ed., *Violent Non-State Actors in World Politics*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2010, p. 286.

[27] Patrick Johnston, "The Geography of Insurgent Organization and Its Consequences for Civil Wars: Evidence from Liberia and Sierra Leone," *Security Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 1, 2008.

- deep levels of inequality in Sierra Leonean society, which meant that the south and southeast parts of the country were virtually ignored by the central government and that a mere 22 percent of the rural population had access to clean water in 1990.[28]

Sierra Leone falls near the bottom of the UN Development Programme's Human Development Index and has extremely low per capita gross national income levels. The erosion of the legitimate foundations of traditional state institutions and an inability to provide the public goods of security and stability led to a power vacuum in what was already one of the world's most unstable areas. Limited resources, coupled with an absence of the rule of law, turned the region into a free-for-all battle for survival. Those who were able to hold power and secure access, however tenuously, chose not to reinvest their resources back into the country and instead chose to enrich themselves and their cronies, much as the ruling governments of the region's nations had been doing for decades. "In the end, what motivated young people's decision to join the armed groups, especially the RUF and the West Side Boys, was as varied as the extensive variety of economic, familial, personal, and political influences in their lives."[29]

Illicit Economy, Crime, and Violence

West Africa's illicit economy resulted from decades of economic deterioration, subregional instability, and a disaffected youth population of "have-nots" with few opportunities in ever-shrinking formal economy. Corruption and porous borders made smuggling and trafficking a logical alternative for the region's aggrieved citizens. The region's vast mineral wealth, with its commercially exploitable deposits of highly portable alluvial diamonds made illicit mining and diamond smuggling highly profitable activities. Periods of prolonged conflict, spillover violence, and political instability only increased the ease with which traffickers and smugglers operated throughout the region. Furthermore,

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[28] V. A. B. Davies, "Sierra Leone: Ironic Tragedy," *Journal of African Economies*, Vol. 9, No. 3, 2000, p. 355.

[29] Aning, 2010, p. 286.

criminal networks in West Africa have been described as the natural extension of "connections between commercial, political and societal bases of power and influence."[30]

Sierra Leone is very typical of what William Reno has labeled a "shadow state," thus named because it operates behind a veneer of laws and institutions, but these are merely a ruse that obfuscates corrupt and arbitrary personalistic rule. While many of the characteristics of Reno's archetypical shadow state could be found in Sierra Leone, several of the most important elements are as follows:[31]

- Leaders of shadow states disrupt the organization of any coherent political groups that could function as a legitimate opposition to incumbent rule.
- Rulers purposefully manipulate factional splits and intentionally weaken state bureaucracies to encourage dependence on the ruler as a means of survival.
- Economic motivations remain the overarching priority of state leaders. By dominating all means of acquiring wealth, shadow-state rulers can control populations through patronage appointments, as discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.
- There is an ongoing cycle of alliances and competition between armed groups and officials attached to the shadow state, which leads to predation instead of protection as the most logical strategy for security and resource acquisition.

When the state loses its monopoly on violence, groups that are in a position to bear and use arms most effectively are also in the best position to benefit in the shadow state. In this type of society, for both the state and various armed groups, the population is a tool to be used at will—robbed, abused, discarded, and, in many cases, worse.

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[30] William Reno, "Understanding Criminality in West African Conflicts," *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 16, No. 1, 2009a, p. 50.

[31] Reno, 2000b.

Violence Against Civilians

Much of the violence employed by rebel groups against the civilian populations in West Africa can be attributed to a lack of any clear political ideology. While some have described the RUF's platform as a "somewhat fluid and abstract cocktail of socialist ideals," there is little doubt that the group and its leadership held few tangible beliefs beyond wreaking havoc and hoarding diamonds.[32] Just a few of the rebel-initiated offensives during the war, dubbed Operation Pay Yourself, Operation No Hands, and Operation No Living Thing, suggest an insurgent group with little understanding of the importance of winning popular support during wartime. As in Mexico, much of the violence in West Africa was directed toward civilians.

Complicating the use of violence against civilians was the problem of attribution. When attempting to determine which group was responsible for perpetrating attacks against noncombatants during the war, the answer was not as easy as soldier or rebels. Indeed, *sobels*, shorthand for soldier-rebels, were behind many of these attacks. *Sobels* were underpaid soldiers who posed as rebels to extort and steal from civilians.[33] The prototypical soldier-by-day-rebel-by-night came from the Civil Defense Forces and added an interesting twist to a conflict characterized by myriad groups, including insurgents, militia, private military contractors, mining gangs, and child soldiers.[34]

Child Soldiers

Over the course of the war in Sierra Leone, the RUF utilized the services of more than 3,000 child soldiers. Half of those children were estimated to be between the ages of eight and 14 years old.[35] It was not only the rebels who recruited children. Government forces engaged in

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[32] Aning, 2010, pp. 288–289.

[33] Reno, 1998, p. 125.

[34] For further reading on the Civil Defense Forces militia, see Danny Hoffman, "The Meaning of a Militia: Understanding the Civil Defense Forces of Sierra Leone," *African Affairs*, Vol. 106, No. 425, 2007.

[35] Krijn Peters and Paul Richards, "'Why We Fight': Voices of Youth Combatants in Sierra Leone," *Africa*, Vol. 68, No. 2, 1998.

this practice as well, further contributing to the low level of professionalism and overall lack of discipline among the state's security forces.

Children were a prime target for recruitment because they could be forced into joining the fight. As more and more Sierra Leoneans were killed or displaced, more children were orphaned and left to fend for themselves. Joining one of the rebel groups provided them with a means of survival in the immediate term. Children also asked very few questions and were easier to manipulate. Some child soldiers were ritualistically cut near a temple, after which a mixture of cocaine and gunpowder would be rubbed in the open wound, which was then taped and left to scar. Commanders encouraged their subordinates to drink alcohol and smoke crack cocaine, hoping that the mixture would desensitize them before they committed unthinkable atrocities that included raping women and children. While Mexican VDTOs have yet to be accused of relying on "child soldiers," per se, the 7 million unemployed Mexicans who make up *los ni ni* (*ni estudia ni trabaja*, not in school, not employed) provide the drug gangs with a fertile recruiting base from which to replenish their losses.

Smuggling and Trafficking

The criminalization of the insurgency in Sierra Leone began shortly after the conflict started, toward the end of 1992. Many of the students who attempted to provide some semblance of a political ideology, as evidenced by an early document this cadre produced titled "Foot Path to Democracy," were exiled to Ghana during the early stages of the war. Around this time, Charles Taylor's influence increased and greed soon replaced need- and creed-based motives for waging the insurgency.[36]

It should be no surprise that West Africa was and still is an attractive destination for smugglers and traffickers. After all, this is a region with porous borders, corrupt state officials, and an abundance of diamonds, a commodity that is easily transported and yields an extremely

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[36] Jimmy D. Kandeh, "The Criminalization of the RUF Insurgency in Sierra Leone," in Cynthia J. Arnson and I. William Zartman, eds., *Rethinking the Economics of War: The Intersection of Need, Creed, and Greed*, Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2005, p. 99.

high value to volume ratio. "Blood diamonds," or "conflict diamonds," have come to define the criminal aspect of the wars in West Africa.[37] Still, the region has also been known for trafficking in narcotics, arms, people, and endangered species.

"Blood Diamonds"

By 1992, the RUF controlled the diamond mines in Sierra Leone's Kono District. The insurgents used the money gained through their illicit activities to purchase automatic rifles. They were also supplied with machine guns, submachine guns, grenade launchers, mortars, and surface-to-air missiles.[38] In a move wrest control of the diamond fields away from the insurgents, the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) hired the South African mercenary firm Executive Outcomes (EO). EO entered the country with 150 soldiers and sophisticated weaponry, including helicopter gunships, while also using pre-assault mortar barrages and ground assault to effectively force the insurgents back into the countryside.[39] EO also successfully employed Kamajors, traditional hunters of the Mende ethnic group, as local militias to protect local communities.

The result was a three-way deal among the Sierra Leonean government, EO, and Branch Energy Ltd. that allowed EO to operate in Kono and the Kangari Hills, where the diamond mines were located. But by 1997, less than two years after EO had been replaced by a UN peacekeeping force, the RUF was back in control of the diamond mines. Charles Taylor used the diamond mines in Sierra Leone to further his own war efforts in Liberia. In the late 1990s, Liberia was exporting ten times as many diamonds as it was capable of producing.[40]

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[37] A brief yet cogent discussion of the history of conflict diamonds in Sierra Leone dating back to World War II and the De Beers monopoly can be found in R. Thomas Naylor, *Wages of Crime: Black Markets, Illegal Finance, and the Underworld Economy*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2002, pp. 308–311.

[38] Dena Montague, "The Business of War and the Prospects for Peace in Sierra Leone," *Brown Journal of World Affairs*, Vol. 9, No. 1, Spring 2002.

[39] Montague, 2002, p. 233.

[40] Kandeh, 2005, p. 100.

During the wars in West Africa, the violent competition to control the diamond market resulted in a prolonged and bloody conflict. Similar to Mexico, the immense scale of the profits was enough of an incentive for violent criminal and insurgent organizations to continue fighting for control of what had developed into a hypercompetitive market characterized by death and mutilation. Like drug trafficking, diamond smuggling is not an inherently violent endeavor. Rather, it is the struggle to gain market share that produces the fatalities, which in turn leads to further conflict between violent nonstate actors and those seeking to counter their activities. In many cases, it takes a sustained, well-resourced security force presence to quell the violence to a level at which reform can take root.

Narcotics

During the 1990s, West Africa emerged as a critical hub in the global narcotics trade, with South American cocaine transiting through the region before being shipped to Western Europe and parts of Asia, including Russia. Other drugs, such as heroin, marijuana, and methamphetamine are also regularly trafficked through the region.[41] Over the past decade, Latin American drug barons have shifted a share of their wholesale distribution network to West Africa. The region is now at the nexus of wholesale repackaging, re-routing, and resale of drugs.[42] The most notorious drug traffickers in the region are Nigerians, known to be particularly ruthless in dealing with their rivals. Nigerian organized crime is ubiquitous throughout West Africa, and Nigerians have remained active players in the region's narcotics trafficking networks, utilizing its extensive contacts abroad in the U.S. and Europe to arrange and broker deals, as well as serve as middlemen for transportation.

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[41] Audra K. Grant, "Smuggling and Trafficking in Africa," in Kimberley L. Thachuk, ed., *Transnational Threats: Smuggling and Trafficking in Arms, Drugs, and Human Life*, Westport, Conn.: Praeger Security International, 2007, p. 117.

[42] David E. Brown, *The Challenge of Drug Trafficking to Democratic Governance and Human Security in West Africa*, Carlisle, Pa.: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, May 2013, p. 18.

But the longest-standing networks for narcotics smuggling date back decades, when commercially powerful Lebanese syndicates first used the region as a transit zone for heroin.[43] Traffickers from the Lebanese diaspora in West Africa coexisted, though not always peacefully, with Russian mafia crime bosses like Marat Balagula, who used Sierra Leone as a headquarters to smuggle Soviet diamonds in exchange for heroin from Thailand.[44] Other international criminals included Dutch drug gangs that used West Africa as a transshipment point for hashish from Asia and as a conduit for South American cocaine destined for the United Kingdom.[45]

High levels of corruption, a lack of the rule of law, and police forces overwhelmed by general security issues—to say nothing of the booming narcotics trade—make West Africa the ideal "soft target" for drug traffickers. This is especially true of criminals who seek to use the region as an area to forge new criminal relationships and illicit partnerships.[46] "Indeed, the more capable organizations are at corrupting officials, the more legitimate their activities become," remarks Audra Grant.[47] Another pressing problem for West African governments is that transport hubs ultimately face some spillover social consequences as drug *users* proliferate alongside the networks that smuggle the drugs.

State Failure and Weak Governance

Sierra Leone is an example of what Robert Jackson has dubbed "quasi-states," which are governments that have been internationally enfranchised but still lack the political will, institutional authority, and ability to protect human rights or provide for the socioeconomic welfare of their own citizens.[48] In the 1990s, weak governance in West Africa

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[43] Stephen Ellis, "West Africa's International Drug Trade," *African Affairs*, Vol. 108, No. 431, 2009, p. 193.

[44] Ellis, 2009, p. 182.

[45] Ellis, 2009, p. 191.

[46] Cockayne and Williams, 2009, p. 4.

[47] Grant, 2007, p. 119.

[48] Robert H. Jackson, *Quasi-States: Sovereignty, International Relations, and the Third World*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990, p. 21.

extended beyond merely ineffective government institutions, a lack of basic public services, and poor leadership. Few educational opportunities and little possibility of advancement, a decimated infrastructure, and low adult literacy were all symptoms of states with a compromised capacity to govern.[49] But what accelerated the corrosion of the state was the lack of political will and absence of commitment to improve the situation.

Populations could accept, however begrudgingly, a certain level of ineptitude. But outright discrimination and obstructionism differed from feeble state capacity. The denial of human rights, a blatant disregard for democracy and the rule of law, and a highly fragmented state that actively stifled dissent brought about the downfall of kleptocratic regimes long since hollowed out by corruption and an inequitable system of patronage that failed to adequately spread the wealth.

Corruption

Well before the outbreak of hostilities, a culture of rampant corruption, dating back decades, had become deeply entrenched in Sierra Leone. Siaka Stevens, who ruled as Sierra Leone's first president from 1971 to 1985, engineered the large-scale looting of state revenues while consolidating control over the production and exchange of the country's valuable resources. But in West Africa, corruption is just as much about greed as it is about building a personal power base against rivals.

Before Stevens's ascension, diamonds generated approximately $200 million in profits for Sierra Leone's formal economy, which amounted to approximately 30 percent of its national output and provided for roughly 70 percent of its foreign exchange reserves. By 1987, the diamonds that passed through legal and taxable channels were worth a mere $100,000. In turn, spending on health and education dropped by 60 percent between 1980 and 1987.

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[49] A UN Development Programme Human Development Report listed Sierra Leone's adult literacy rate at 13.3 percent, the lowest of the 160 countries in the report. United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 1991: Financing Human Development*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1991, p. 121.

One major consequence was a weakening of civilian control over Sierra Leone's army.[50] Rather than recruit soldiers into the army (which was capped at about 2,000 troops under Stevens), rulers relied on their own patronage networks for security. As a result, by the 1980s, Sierra Leone's army was reduced to little more than a parade force, incapable of performing even the most basic military functions let alone defending the country against an armed uprising.

The zero-sum nature of politics in West Africa meant that laws were manipulated and selectively enforced to serve those with political connections.[51] As politicians stuffed their pockets with revenues that should have been used to rebuild crumbling infrastructure or to invest in Sierra Leone's human capital, the treasuries of myriad state institutions withered. Formal sources of revenue that were collected were used to reward cronies and target political rivals. "Tellingly, anticorruption tribunals focused on low-level or exiled officials with no mention of incumbent strongmen," according to Reno.[52]

Through the presidencies of Siaka Stevens and Joseph Saidu Momoh of the All People's Congress, the military rule of Valentine Strasser and NPRC,[53] and the reintroduction of civilian governance under Ahmad Tejan Kabbah and the Sierra Leone People's Party, corruption was perhaps the most consistent defining feature of the government. To many scholars, this should not come as a surprise, since corruption in West Africa has often been a deliberate strategy. Many African leaders myopically use national revenues as a resource to be exploited, or what Elinor Ostrom has referred to as "common pool

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[50] Sahr John Kpundeh, "Limiting Administrative Corruption in Sierra Leone," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 1, March 1994.

[51] Reno, 2009a, p. 50.

[52] Reno, 1998, p. 126.

[53] Strasser's military junta of the NPRC seized power in a military coup and governed Sierra Leone from 1992 until 1996. See Lansana Gberie, *A Dirty War in West Africa: The RUF and the Destruction of Sierra Leone*, Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2005, pp. 68–69. For more on the corruption of the NPRC, see Abdullah and Muana, 1998, p. 181.

resources."[54] Corruption is also a key enabler of the patronage networks that can be both an inhibitor and facilitator of economic activity and have come to dominate West Africa over time.

Patronage Politics

Sierra Leone's extensive patronage networks led to the excessive centralization of authority at the expense of the government bureaucracy. Functional holes meant that the government was unable to cope with such serious issues as poverty, deprivation, and the challenges of population flows and mass migration.[55] Capacity gaps made regulatory mechanisms at the regional and international levels nearly impossible to enforce. Legitimacy deficits left patronage as the only real option for survival.[56]

To make up for the lack of social provisions, a small ruling elite engaged in Tammany Hall–style patronage, characterized by the exchange of benefits for political support. These benefits are typically economic in nature and take the form of money, jobs, or access to valuable resources. Because this style of patronage allows for a certain level of "independent business activity," the inevitable result is a struggle to control economic rents and the simultaneous existence of a rentier state and predatory warlords.[57]

Even prior to the war, Sierra Leone was a prime example of the archetypical "warlord state," led by rulers who relied on patronage networks for survival and were forced to hire private security firms for

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[54] Eleanor Ostrom, Roy Gardner, and James Walker, with Arun Agrawal, William Bloomquist, Edella Schlager, and Shui Yan Ting, *Rules, Games, and Common-Pool Resources*, Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 1993. See also Jeffrey Herbst, *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000, pp. 131–133.

[55] Beginning several years before its own civil war commenced, Sierra Leone (and Guinea) was flooded with refugees from Liberia once fighting broke out there starting in late 1989. Martin Lowenkopf, "Liberia: Putting the State Back Together," in I. William Zartman, ed., *Collapsed States: The Disintegration and Restoration of Legitimate Authority*, Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Reiner, 1995, p. 95.

[56] Reno, 1998, pp. 117–118.

[57] Reno, 2009a, p. 49.

protection.[58] Under Stevens, some youth joined the network to serve as muscle to the political machine. A lucky few with access to the upper echelon were able to secure positions as local political bosses. They pledged their loyalty to state officials in exchange for being allowed to participate in the "official" illicit diamond-mining economy.[59] They prospered as part of joint ventures with the leadership, which allowed them to liaise with foreign diamond traders and connect with commercial rackets.

Even further down the patronage chain were the mining gangs that coalesced around a "big man" who provided access to mines and a chance at economic opportunity. Entrepreneurial power brokers made deals with middlemen who had access to overseas connections and foreign exchange opportunities; this allowed the warlords to employ illicit miners (as many as 50,000 at a time) who in turn pledged their loyalty in exchange for jobs.[60] Many of these gangs were composed of marginalized youth who used drugs, eschewed traditional authority structures, and were generally disconnected from society.

As smaller groups of this ilk proliferated, individual fiefdoms were established, empowering warlords who were interested only in the extraction of resources for profit. Needless to say, warlords used violence and coercion to maintain their hold on these fiefdoms. But the fact of the matter remained: These same violent warlords offered disenfranchised youth one of their few opportunities to participate in any kind of economic activity.[61]

While warlords offered economic opportunities to some of the dregs of Sierra Leone's society, the state security forces continued to provoke them. The government launched Operation Clear All and Operation Clean Sweep to clear the diamond fields of illegal miners.

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[58] Dobbins, Jones, Crane, Chivvis, et al., 2008, p. 30.

[59] William Reno, "Persistent Insurgencies and Warlords: Who Is Nasty, Who Is Nice, and Why?" in Anne L. Clunan and Harold A. Trinkunas, eds., *Ungoverned Spaces: Alternatives to State Authority in an Era of Softened Sovereignty*, Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2010, p. 67.

[60] Reno, 1998, p. 117.

[61] Reno, 2009a, p. 55.

These operations alienated large segments of the population and helped swell the ranks of the insurgency. As Reno observes, "Gangs of miners had little reason to fight to defend a government that defined their activities as illicit, launched periodic military campaigns against them, and provided virtually no social services."[62] These operations were just one example of the many government-initiated actions that prolonged the insurgency.

Another unintended consequence of the government's COIN strategy was splintering. Over time, as the RUF splintered, factions of the group "grafted themselves onto illicit, economy-fueled political networks to underwrite their own power."[63] Before the criminal government-insurgent patronage networks that now dominate Afghanistan, overlapping conflicts in West Africa saw government officials and insurgents mingle closely. The result was that the composition of insurgent groups soon closely resembled the very government against which these groups fought.[64]

What Was Done to Improve the Situation?

Attempts to improve the situation in Sierra Leone took several forms and were implemented in waves. The first attempt was the NPRC's decision to hire EO, which was temporarily successful in providing the government access to the diamond mines. However, it failed to bring a broader measure of stability to the country. Under the terms of the 1996 Abidjan Agreement inked by the Kabbah government, EO left the country and was replaced by Nigerian-led troops from the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG).

In Liberia, ECOMOG soldiers had engaged in looting, plundering, and general corruption, with the Nigerian contingent singled out as particularly odious.[65] These troops were widely accused of prolong-

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[62] Reno, 1998, pp. 121–124.

[63] William Reno, *Warfare in Independent Africa: New Approaches to African History*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011, p. 185.

[64] Reno, 2003, p. 91.

[65] Ellis, 1998, p. 163.

ing the fighting for their own commercial gain.[66] In Sierra Leone, they proved no better. Even when they were not operating in a manner antithetical to their mission, the troops were ineffective. ECOMOG troops had poor logistical support and only a few barely functioning vehicles.[67] When it became apparent that ECOMOG was incapable of providing lasting stability in Sierra Leone, the United Nations established the UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), soon after the Lome Peace Accord in July 1999.

UNAMSIL can be considered the second wave sent to save Sierra Leone from collapse. The UN peacekeeping force in Sierra Leone cost approximately $2.8 billion over six years (it withdrew in 2005). At its apex, UNAMSIL deployed 17,500 soldiers.[68] Additional troops came from Pakistan, Nepal, and Ukraine and included U.S.-trained and -equipped units from Nigeria and Ghana.[69] UNAMSIL's presence was an improvement over the ECOMOG force, but it was not without its own shortcomings. In its first attempt to disarm the rebels, UNAMSIL troops failed to act in a consistent and professional manner in the lead-up to the collapse of the Lome peace process in May 2000. The weapons that were surrendered were never actually destroyed, so when violence flared up again after the collapse of the talks, the insurgents were able to reacquire them and continue fighting.[70]

The third and final wave consisted of a last-ditch effort to rescue the mission and restore some of its credibility. To accomplish this task, the United Kingdom deployed 1,200 troops to Freetown to evacuate

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[66] Stephen Ellis, *The Mask of Anarchy: The Destruction of Liberia and the Religious Dimension of an African Civil War*, New York: New York University Press, 1999, p. 108.

[67] Dobbins, Jones, Crane, Rathmell, et al., 2005, p. 131.

[68] William Reno, "Bottom-Up Statebuilding?" in Charles T. Call with Vanessa Wyeth, eds., *Building States to Build Peace*, Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 2008, p. 158. This force grew from 6,000 in October 1999 to 11,000 in February 2000, and ultimately reaching a peak of 17,500 in March 2001.

[69] Dobbins, Jones, Crane, Rathmell, et al., 2005, p. 141.

[70] Nat J. Colletta, Markus Kostner, and Ingo Wiederhofer, "Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration: Lessons and Liabilities in Reconstruction," in Robert I. Rotberg, ed., *When States Fail: Causes and Consequences*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004, p. 173.

UK and other European nationals, bolster the UNAMSIL force, and stabilize the country as a whole.[71] The British mission was threefold: Build the capacity of the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces, assist the armed forces with implementing necessary institutional changes,[72] and, eventually, shepherd the insurgents through the DDR process.[73] With British troops in the country to assist UNAMSIL, COIN forces embarked on an effective campaign to wipe out the threat from the RUF while restoring the government to power.

Almost immediately upon intervening, the British launched successive military operations, Operation Barras and Operation Palliser, to reset the balance of power in Sierra Leone and establish the United Kingdom as the most potent military force in the country. Operation Palliser lasted from May to June 2000 and mobilized a force of approximately 700 ground troops backed by an additional 4,500 troops afloat. The mandate was to protect the airport in Freetown and evacuate British citizens.[74] Operation Barras, which included troops from the 1st Battalion of the Parachute Regiment and a detachment of Special Air Service forces, was a successful effort to defeat the West Side Boys and rescue UN forces that had been taken hostage.[75] According to Dobbins et al., "Only after the mission was on the verge of collapse did the intervention of British forces and the personal engagement of the UN Secretary-General manage to turn incipient failure into partial success."[76] Table 4.1 shows some of the many organizations that were tasked with helping to rebuild the country.

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[71] Funmi Olonisakin, *Peacekeeping in Sierra Leone: The Story of UNAMSIL*, Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 2008, p. 63.

[72] The United Kingdom helped Sierra Leone establish its Ministry of Defence and the Office of National Security.

[73] Dobbins, Jones, Crane, Chivvis, et al., 2008, p. 37.

[74] Dobbins, Jones, Crane, Chivvis, et al., 2008, p. 34.

[75] In May 2000, more than 500 UN soldiers, many from Kenya, were captured by the RUF and held hostage. See Dobbins, Jones, Crane, Rathmell, et al., 2005, p. 140. For more on Operation Barras, see Richard Connaughton, "Operation Barras," *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 12, No. 2, 2001, pp. 110–119.

[76] Dobbins, Jones, Crane, Rathmell, et al., 2005, p. 139.

Table 4.1
Organizations Involved in Reconstruction in West Africa

Organization	Duties and Tasks
UN Civilian Police	Opened up regional police training schools in Kenema and Bo
UN Development Programme	Established an election trust fund that covered three-quarters of the cost of the 2002 presidential election[a]
UNAMSIL Civil Affairs Sector	Facilitated communication between Sierra Leone's government and the insurgents
UK Department for International Development	Implemented the Enhancing the Interaction and Interface Between Civil Society and the State to Improve Poor People's Lives program; established the Justice Sector Development Programme in 2005, followed by the Improved Access to Security and Justice Programme in 2010[b]
National Electoral Commission	Responsible for monitoring elections to ensure that they were "free and fair"[c]
Peace Diamond Alliance	Gathered miners, local chiefs, diamond traders, government officials, community leaders, and international donors to provide technical support through the Integrated Diamond Management Program[d]
Special Court for Sierra Leone	Tasked with investigating war crimes and crimes against humanity
Truth and Reconciliation Commission	Had a mandate to establish a consensual narrative on the conflict by those who lived it[e]
Anti-Corruption Commission	Charged with investigating allegations of corruption, assisting the public administration in changing its practices, and changing mentalities among the broader population regarding corruption
Paramount Chiefs Restoration Program	Aimed to reestablish traditional chiefs in their positions, arrange for the election of new chiefs where necessary, and provide for their needs

[a] Dobbins, Jones, Crane, Rathmell, et al., 2005, p. 144.

[b] This was intended as a form of rapprochement between civil society and the government. See Dobbins, Miller, et al., 2013, p. 162. For more on judicial-sector reform, see Dobbins, Miller, et al., 2013, p. 170.

[c] "Sierra Leone: Internal Affairs," *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment: West Africa*, July 28, 2010.

[d] Dobbins, Miller, et al., 2013, p. 164.

[e] International Crisis Group, *Sierra Leone's Truth and Reconciliation Commission: A Fresh Start?* Africa Briefing No. 12, December 20, 2002, pp. 1–2.

[f] International Crisis Group, *Sierra Leone: A New Era of Reform?* Africa Report No. 143, July 31, 2008, p. 17.

[g] Richard Fanthorpe, *Post-War Reconstruction in Rural Sierra Leone: What Political Structures May Prove Viable? Final Report*, London: UK Department for International Development, 2004.

In addition to the agencies and their associated tasks listed, the World Bank and the IMF provided economic assistance, including debt cancellation.[77] There were also efforts to promote an independent media and free press, including a range of newspapers and radio stations.[78] The Improved Governance and Accountability Pact of July 2006 was a measure that sought to address the roots of the conflict by promoting good governance, which largely took the form of increased accountability among public officials, countering corruption, and decentralizing the government.[79]

How Did It End Up?

The intervention to quell Sierra Leone's vicious civil war succeeded in bringing the violence to a manageable level. Overall, there were improvements in several areas. First, literacy rates in Sierra Leone have risen sharply and, as of 2009, stood at 41 percent among adults and 58 percent among youth.[80] Between 2003 and 2007, 153 primary and secondary schools were constructed, and the government has been providing free, mandatory education for primary-school-age children since 2001.[81] Second, governance and respect for human rights have improved. Since the end of the conflict, though marred by occasional political violence, which was so common before the war, elections have largely been considered free and fair. Democratic reforms have accompanied good governance initiatives, which have been buoyed by a move toward decentralization. Third, by the beginning of 2004, 47,000 combatants had been demobilized and more than 30,000 weapons had been destroyed.[82]

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[77] Dobbins, Miller, et al., 2013, pp. 163–164.

[78] Brian Thomson, *Sierra Leone: Reform or Relapse? Conflict and Governance Reform*, London: Chatham House, June 2007, p. 2.

[79] Dobbins, Jones, Crane, Chivvis, et al., 2008, p. 41.

[80] Dobbins, Miller, et al., 2013, p. 163.

[81] Dobbins, Miller, et al., 2013, p. 163.

[82] Dobbins, Jones, Crane, Rathmell, et al., 2005, p. 142.

Unfortunately, for all the improvements made since the end of the conflict, there have been numerous setbacks or stalled attempts at progress. Genuine progress in several areas has been stymied by continued corruption and patronage in an improved though still extremely fragile economy.[83] Patronage networks remain strong: After the conflict ended, it became common for former wartime commanders to become prominent business figures or legislators. Fighters demobilized after the end of West Africa's violent conflicts of the 1990s, and their leaders have regrouped and continue to exploit both the legitimized licensed resource economies and their illegal offshoots and other criminal rackets.

Although the DDR program was lauded for demobilizing fighters and destroying weapons, it also faced severe criticism for teaching ex-combatants trade skills with low demand in Sierra Leone and overlooking the needs of female ex-combatants, among other problems.[84] Furthermore, regulation of the mining sector has been plagued by obstacles, and there has been limited success in reforming Sierra Leone's diamond industry.

Similarities and Differences Between West Africa and Mexico

There are many similarities between West Africa and Mexico, including porous borders, a high value-to-volume ratio of the primary illicit products trafficked through its territory, corruption, and few economic or employment alternatives for large numbers of youth. However, the three most striking similarities are the role of the police, alternatively governed spaces, and the use of national territory as a transshipment corridor.

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[83] Dobbins, Miller, et al., 2013, pp. 152, 166.

[84] Dobbins, Miller, et al., 2013, p. 162.

Violence

The horrific civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone and the resulting violence throughout the region in the 1990s made it easier for criminals and insurgents to exploit West Africa's natural resources. Unlike in Mexico, there were numerous ties between terrorism, violence, conflict, and instability in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Terrorist groups, including Hezbollah, have been linked to the region's illicit diamond market and to Lebanese traders and merchants who have been active in the area stretching back decades, when several generations of Shia left northern Beqaa and Hirmil to find work.[85] Many so-called conflict diamonds were mined in Sierra Leone and then transported through Liberia and Guinea.[86] Then they were sent abroad to the world market, to such cities and Antwerp, Dubai, London, Tel Aviv, New York City, and Mumbai. In addition to Hezbollah, and perhaps even more troubling, al-Qaeda and its affiliate al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb are known to have used the same model and contacts as the Hezbollah when operating in West Africa.[87] Lebanese networks, specifically Hezbollah, are among the main players in the import and smuggling of cocaine from West Africa across the Sahel and on to Europe.[88]

Indiscriminate Mayhem or "Anomic Violence"

In West Africa, unlike in Mexico, there was a certain curiosity to some of the violence practiced by the RUF, the West Side Boys, and others. To be sure, greed was one motivating factor, as it is for the Mexican cartels. Both sets of actors can be described as uncontrollably violent, but West African groups have been described in the literature as "irra-

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[85] Augustus Richard Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007, pp. 13–14.

[86] Gail Wannenburg, "Organised Crime in West Africa," *African Security Review*, Vol. 14, No. 4, 2005, p. 10.

[87] Matthew Levitt, "Hezbollah Finances: Funding the Party of God," in Jeanne K. Giraldo and Harold A. Trinkunas, eds., *Terrorism Financing and State Responses: A Comparative Perspective*, Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2007.

[88] Eric Denécé and Alain Rodier, "The Security Challenges of West Africa," in Philipp Heinrigs and Marie Trémolières, eds., *Global Security Risks and West Africa: Development Challenges*, Paris, France: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2012.

tional" and "mad," with no end game when it came to violence.[89] The "Kalashnikov lifestyle" enabled by the shadow state became a reality among young men for whom violence was not means to an end but a way of life.

Traditional Threat/Insurgency

The role of so-called blood diamonds is most commonly associated with these wars, and, indeed, resources were a primary motivation for many of the actors. Nevertheless, the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone were traditional insurgencies in that they were undoubtedly driven by a desire for the belligerents, particularly Charles Taylor's NPFL, to capture the state and consolidate political power. Control over resources is a major factor in Mexico's violence, too; however, the VDTOs have shown little interest in seizing the reins of power. On the contrary, these organizations seem quite content to let the state govern while they continue to pursue profits.

Ethnically Motivated Violence

Ethnically motivated violence in West Africa was certainly part and parcel of the broader conflict, particularly in Liberia, where Gio and Mano tribesmen fought against a COIN force that consisted primarily of ethnic Krahn and Mandingo soldiers, but as Stephen Ellis has noted, the "mobilization of ethnic identify was more rhetoric than reality, as every faction included substantial numbers of fighters of diverse ethnic origin."[90]

Lack of Economic Opportunities

For all the talk about Mexico becoming a failed state, it has never been close to the brink of outright collapse the way that Sierra Leone was in the 1990s. The disruption of old political hierarchies and near-continuous conflict led Sierra Leone—already one of the poorest countries in the world—close to economic ruin. By 1995, state revenues approached full collapse, and the army consumed 75 percent of state

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[89] Aning, 2010, p. 278.

[90] Ellis, 1999, p. 105.

spending.[91] By 1998, the country's already pathetic GDP had been halved.[92] Moreover, there was a near-constant threat of humanitarian catastrophe. After the 1999 RUF offensive, residents of Freetown suffered from hunger and disease. To survive, civilians were forced to eat rats, maggots, and frogs while a cholera epidemic spread through the capital.[93]

Weapon Availability

International arms traffickers from the former Soviet Union, Israel, and South Africa mingled with warlords, diamond merchants, and mercenaries in West Africa. Partly as a result of ineffective arms embargoes and regulations, a large percentage of the region's population has historically been heavily armed. Indeed, a UN arms-for-cash deal supplied fighters with $75 in exchange for weapons, but because the cost of an AK-47 is much lower than $75, the flow of arms into Liberia may have actually *increased*.[94]

Competition over a Resource

Throughout the wars of the 1990s and continuing to the present day, West Africa has been a major transshipment corridor for illicit materials—most notably conflict diamonds and narcotics. And while increased scrutiny of the diamond trade has brought greater attention to that issue, West Africa's role in the narcotics trade has only grown over time. A perfect storm of factors, including greater cocaine demand in Europe, a decline in the U.S. cocaine market, and intensified counternarcotics operations in the Caribbean, has made West Africa an extremely important transshipment corridor for narcotics. In fact, according to Vanda Felbab-Brown and James Forest, 50 percent of non–U.S.-bound cocaine (13 percent of the global cocaine

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[91] Reno, 1998, p. 126.

[92] World Bank, *Transitional Support Strategy for the Republic of Sierra Leone*, Washington, D.C., March 3, 2002, p. 2.

[93] Dobbins, Jones, Crane, Rathmell, et al., 2005, p. 134.

[94] Mark Doyle, "UN's Liberia 'Honeymoon' to End," BBC News, January 23, 2004.

flow) transits through West Africa.[95] Latin American and Southern European DTOs have developed close partnerships with West African criminal networks and rely on the region to transport not only cocaine but also, increasingly, cannabis, heroin, and the precursor chemicals used to make methamphetamine.[96]

Like West Africa, Mexico suffers from the curse of geography. Its location as a transit corridor between Colombia and the United States means that unless the supply of heroin, cocaine, marijuana, and other drugs suddenly ceases—and we have no reason to believe it will—Mexico and Mexican VDTOs will remain a major front in the never-ending and oft-questioned War on Drugs.

Ungoverned Spaces

Throughout West Africa, large swaths of territory are under alternative governance—that is, beyond the reach of the state and under the control of warlords, defined by Reno as "leaders of predatory armed groups that seek power for their personal enrichment without regard for the broader interests of any significant community."[97] For the marginalized groups of society, there is an obvious appeal to operating outside a system that neither they nor the state considers them a part of, at least in any formal sense. In alternatively governed spaces, there really is an apolitical feel to violence.

Referring to the RUF, Paul Richards has noted, "The movement survives on the energy, wits and desperation" of those young it has initiated.[98] The key part of Richards's analysis is *initiation* into an organization that may be alternatively governed. The hinterlands of West Africa during the wars were defined by violence. In many cases, this affected the power structure by spreading what Reno has called "reverse adult

[95] Vanda Felbab-Brown and James J. F. Forest, "Political Violence and the Illicit Economies of West Africa," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 24, No. 5, 2012, p. 790.

[96] Cockayne and Williams, 2009, p. 4.

[97] William Reno, "Illicit Markets, Violence, Warlords, and Governance: West African Cases," *Crime, Law, and Social Change*, Vol. 52, No. 3, September 2009b, p. 313.

[98] Paul Richards, *Fighting for the Rain Forest: War, Youth and Resources in Sierra Leone*, London: James Currey, 1996, pp. 1–2.

syndrome," or RAS. Genuine adults and achievers are cowed by violence and fear of death and humiliation. The resulting power vacuum is occupied by young children who are willing to become "daredevils" and have little concern about dying. Furthermore, for these child soldiers, violence offers a chance at material wealth.[99]

During the wars in West Africa, the border areas between Sierra Leone and Liberia were some of the least-governed regions on the continent and, indeed, the world. Much like parts of Mexico, state institutions in the Liberian and Sierra Leonean hinterlands were either inefficient or altogether absent. The inability of states throughout the region to project force much beyond their capital cities also facilitated the cross-border movement of rebels and diamonds.

State/Institutional Weakness

As part of the security-sector reform process, UNAMSIL's Civilian Police element and the UK Commonwealth Police promoted the concept of "visible policing" to restore faith in this sullied institution. Nevertheless, the Sierra Leone's national police force remained highly dysfunctional, inefficient, and largely corrupt, and the majority of its personnel were underskilled, underpaid, and undertrained. They lacked basic equipment, including vehicles, and supplemented their incomes through extortion and bribes.[100] Nearly six years after the war ended, the national police force was suffering from low morale, it failed to issue regular paychecks, and it was bereft of the funds needed for basic necessities, such as food and fuel.[101]

Like the *sobels*, police in West Africa were often perceived as protectors by day and predators by night. This is not too dissimilar from accusations levied at local police in Mexico. What is certain, however, is that the true intentions of these hybrid figures made them unpredictable and untrustworthy. As a result, citizens came to view the police as just another predatory actor in an already complex environment. The region's police forces lacked professional ethics and did not understand

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[99] Reno, 2000b, p. 453.

[100] Dobbins, Miller, et al., 2013, p. 160.

[101] Reno, 2009a, pp. 52–53.

their role in terms of serving and protecting citizens. On the contrary, they were abusive and used their positions to contribute to, rather than counter, criminal activities. Since their primary roles were to serve as political tools designed to intimidate the opposition, or as personal security detail to politicians who hired them, there was little impetus to appear neutral or uphold the rule of law.

Patronage/Corruption

As was common in the past in Mexico, corruption in West Africa has been a deliberate strategy. State revenue has been treated as a resource to be exploited, lubricating key patronage networks that would both inhibit and facilitate economic activity in the region. One of the commonalities between these two cases is that at least some of the violence has been a result of the breakdown of traditional patronage structures. Another similarity between the two cases is that nonstate actors interested in the control of resources for profit (warlords in the West Africa and VDTOs in Mexico) use violence and coercion to maintain a hold on power.

Lessons for Mexico

While perhaps not an obvious analog at first glance, the conflict in West Africa provides a number of useful lessons for a country that, like Mexico, is plagued by extreme violence and an unrelenting wave of illicit trafficking. First, even with an improved police force and success in combating corruption (which does not seem likely), authorities will never be able to completely stop the flow of certain illicit commodities. There is far too much money to be made, and the law of supply and demand will ensure the survival of organizations willing to ply their trade despite the law and efforts to enforce it. The key is to focus on the most disruptive and dangerous networks and target them for elimination. Second, governments that are overwhelmed by escalating violence need to seriously consider accepting outside assistance, even in the form of an extended intervention. By remaining aware of the comparative advantage that external actors can provide and accepting help

from those better tasked to tackle certain challenges, host-nation governments can devote more attention and energy to other areas of pressing need. Furthermore, just because violence ebbs, that does not mean crime will necessary abate as well. In fact, in may be just the opposite, as many former combatants can become disenfranchised with the DDR process and, rather than rejoin society, may link up with preexisting criminal networks. By focusing on the lowest common denominator of training police forces that are responsive to the needs of citizens and capable of combating VDTOs, governments can make slow yet incremental progress toward stability.

The final takeaway from West Africa as a comparative case—and perhaps the primary reason for our assessment that West Africa is a workable comparison for Mexico—is the influence of the shadow state. As discussed earlier in the chapter, Sierra Leone was a prototypical shadow state, in which the state proper had lost its monopoly on the use of violence and was thus challenged by those able to use force effectively to project power. At a minimum, the state remained defiant in the face of efforts to counter these groups, or as in the case of Taylor's Liberia, colluded with militias and criminal networks.

Dismantling the shadow state is a multipronged effort that requires both the diminution of violence and the implementation of government reforms and increased institutional capacity. Nations throughout West Africa made modest gains in reasserting the rule of law and strengthening state capacity following the wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone. However, the region as a whole is still characterized by poor governance and state weakness, though baseline capabilities have improved.

The deployment of British-led security forces was the key factor in bringing West African violence to a halt. From an institutional perspective, although the international community worked to strengthen the bureaucracy and public administration of countries throughout the region—even implementing an anti-corruption commission that was tasked with following up on accusations of corruption—West Africa remained something of a "shadow region." The lesson for Mexico is to ensure that resources directed at institutional reform and fighting corruption are not misdirected. Indeed, they are indispensable for capital-

izing on the reforms begun under Calderón in 2007 and reinforced in 2008 by the Mexican legislature. Some political systems function better after being decentralized, while others, as in Mexico, would benefit from a bureaucracy strengthened from the center to the periphery.

The Caucasus (1990–2012)

Case Selection Categories: Warlordism, Resource Insurgency, Ungoverned Spaces, High Level of Organized Crime

The Caucasus region consists of the states and republics that straddle the Caucasus Mountains of Western Asia. It is an ethnically and geographically diverse area that forms a land bridge between the Middle East and Russia, spanning from the Black Sea in the west to the Caspian Sea in the east. The North Caucasus republics, constituent parts of Russia, include Karachay-Cherkessia, Kabardino-Balkaria, North Ossetia, Ingushetia, Chechnya, and Dagestan. The South Caucasus states, formerly constituent parts of the Soviet Union but now independent, include Georgia (and the separatist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia), Armenia, and Azerbaijan (and the separatist region of Nagorno-Karabakh). This region is bordered to the south by Turkey and Iran.[1] The area has historically been a transit corridor for trade on the Silk Road and serves as an origin, transit, and destination point for a wide range of goods and services.[2]

While the north and south of this region are divided by mountains and putative borders, the entire area has been plagued by conflict and violence since the 1991 breakup of the Soviet Union—an economic

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[1] The region is home to six countries and has ten interstate borders, three major international airports, two sea theaters, and three major international seaports. See Jahangir Arasli, "The Rising Wind: Is the Caucasus Emerging as Hub for Terrorism, Smuggling, and Trafficking?" *Connections*, Vol. 6, No. 1, Spring 2007, pp. 9–10.

[2] Arasli, 2007, p. 9.

and political shock that was unlike anything experienced in Mexico (or many other countries). As the Soviet state receded, territorial, ethnic, separatist, and economic conflict erupted. The region has seen both large- and small-scale violence over the past two decades, and it still experiences episodic fits of both. This had led to, variously and sometimes in combination, significant levels of population displacement,[3] economic turmoil,[4] and societal disruption, all of which have bred even more violence and conflict.

The lifting of state controls in the Caucasus—or, more appropriately, when state control dissolved—was followed by a wave of organized crime. Besides being involved in the violence in the region, organized crime syndicates traded in the services and materials that helped fuel this violence: arms, money, food, drugs, fuel, and people.[5] The late 1990s saw a merging of organized crime with business and political

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[3]   See Jim Nichol, "Security Issues and Implications for Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia," in Aleksandro I. Kapidze, ed., *Caucasus Region: Geopolitical Nexus?* New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2007, p. 15, and Martin Kich, "Azerbaijani Groups," in Frank G. Shanty and Patit Paban Mishra, eds., *Organized Crime: From Trafficking to Terrorism*, Vol. 1, Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, 2008, p. 451.

[4]   See Svante E. Cornell and S. Frederick Starr, *The Caucasus: A Challenge for Europe*, Washington, D.C.: Silk Road Studies Program, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, June 2006, pp. 35–36.

[5]   See Lyudmila Zaitseva, "Illicit Trafficking in the Southern Tier and Turkey Since 1999: A Shift from Europe?" *Nonproliferation Review*, Vol. 9, No. 3, Fall–Winter 2002, p. 171; Louise I. Shelley, "Organized Crime in the Former Soviet Union: The Distinctiveness of Georgia," Tblisi, Georgia: Institute of Legal Reforms, Independent Board of Advisors of the Parliament of Georgia, 1999; Phil Williams, "Terrorism, Organized Crime, and WMD Smuggling: Challenge and Response," *Strategic Insights*, Vol. 6, No. 5, August 2007; Arasli, 2007, p. 8; and Alexandre Kukhianidze, Alexander Kupatadze, and Roman Gotsiridze, "Smuggling in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region in 2003–2004," in Louise Shelley, Erik R. Scott, and Anthony Latta, eds., *Organized Crime and Corruption in Georgia*, New York: Routledge, 2007, pp. 74–78. It is important to note that while the Caucasus is an important transshipment corridor for a variety of drugs—particularly those flowing out of Afghanistan and elsewhere in South Asia—it is also an important transshipment corridor for many other illicit goods. Narcotics do not dominate the illicit economy of the Caucasus as they do in, say, Mexico or the former Soviet states in Central Asia. Stronger state borders and enforcement in the Caucasus region (particularly in Iran and Turkey to the south) somewhat diminish but by no means fully reduce the attractiveness of this area for narcotics shipments arriving from the south and east.

structures.[6] Violence spread throughout the region and even became transnational as porous borders facilitated the movement of criminal and martial groups from one area of conflict to another.[7]

Unleashed after the fall of the Soviet Union, long-held animosities and grievances joined with greed, corruption, and crime to form a violent nexus in the Caucasus. According to Anatol Lieven, for Russia, it is like having a mix of Afghanistan and Sierra Leone for a neighbor or, in the case of the North Caucasus, as constituent republics of the Russian Federation.[8] And although the South Caucasus today is ostensibly more stable than it was in the late 1990s and early 2000s, the North Caucasus is still embroiled in the conflicts and criminality that began more than 20 years ago.

Conflict and Violence in the Caucasus

As mentioned earlier, the conflict and violence that emerged in the Caucasus in the 1990s was unleashed by the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991. This shift brought about the near or total collapse of state structures in both the independent states of the south and the republics in the north. Although Russia maintained a presence in these areas, its power was not what it was during the Soviet period: It no longer had a monopoly on force, corruption exploded, economic failure was endemic, and, simultaneously, in the absence of normal civil institutions, new criminal and martial organizations evolved as the region's states and republics tried to restore some sense of stability.

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[6] Yakov Gilinskiy and Yakov Kostjukovsky, "From Thievish Artel to Criminal Corporation: The History of Organised Crime in Russia," in Cyrille Fijnaut and Letizia Paoli, eds., *Organized Crime in Europe: Concepts, Patterns and Control Policies in the European Union and Beyond*, Norwell, Mass.: Springer, 2006, p. 183.

[7] Revaz Gachechiladze, "Geopolitics in the South Caucasus: Local and External Players," *Geopolitics*, Vol. 7, No. 1, Summer 2002, p. 124.

[8] Anatol Lieven, "Nightmare in the Caucasus," *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 23, No. 1, Winter 2000, p. 145.

State Breakdown

The collapse of the Soviet Union created a multiform vacuum in the Caucasus. As Russian power waned and military forces departed, successor states and republics, accustomed to the security provided by the Soviet federal military and law-enforcement apparatus, abruptly lost control over the monopoly of violence within their territories.[9] Few of the Caucasus republics had the requisite attributes of statehood. As in the lawless areas of Mexico, state-provisioned security was not forthcoming, and informal, alternative military and governance structures abounded.[10] These states and republics had to account for an institutional and ideological void,[11] which led to anomic conditions, widening corruption,[12] generalized crime, and pervasive violence. Even 20-odd years later, security deficits resulting from the dissolution of the Soviet Union remain in the north and south,[13] and some areas are not under any form of governmental control. The Pankisi and Kodori gorges and other areas in Georgia, for instance, have been essentially lawless.[14] Compounding these problems was the fact that the tools for violence were—and still are—nearly everywhere.

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[9]   Christoph Zurcher, *The Post-Soviet Wars: Rebellion, Ethnic Conflict, and Nationhood in the Caucasus*, New York: New York University Press, 2007, p. 213. See also Vicken Cheterian, *War and Peace in the Caucasus: Ethnic Conflict and the New Geopolitics*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2008, p. 288.

[10] See Edmund Herzig, *The New Caucasus: Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia*, New York: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1999, p. 16.

[11] See Paul B. Henze, *Conflict in the Caucasus*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, P-7830, 1993, p. 11; John B. Dunlop and Rajan Menon, "Chaos in the North Caucasus and Russia's Future," *Survival*, Vol. 48, No. 2, Summer 2006, p. 101; and Sang-Weon Kim and William Alex Pridemore, "Poverty, Socioeconomic Change, Institutional Anomie, and Homicide," *Social Science Quarterly*, Vol. 86, No. S1, December 2005, p. 1393.

[12] Corruption has been so egregious in the Caucasus that it has stifled growth, particularly in the North. See Gregory Feifer, "Radicalization Splitting Society in Russia's North Caucasus," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, November 4, 2011.

[13] See Svante E. Cornell, "Security Threats and Challenges in the Caucasus After 9/11," in Ariel Cohen, ed., *Eurasia in Balance: The U.S. and the Regional Power Shift*, Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate Publishing, 2005a, p. 45.

[14] See Arasli, 2007, p. 6; Kenneth Yalowitz and Svante E. Cornell, "The Critical and Perilous Caucasus," *Orbis*, Vol. 48, No. 1, Winter 2004, p. 109; and Kukhianidze, Kupatadze, and Gotsiridze, 2007, p. 79.

The breakup of the Soviet Union and the conditions its dissolution fostered ultimately led to the development of private security forces, which sometimes served the state and sometimes served their own purposes. It also unleashed corruption and criminality, which were extant during the Soviet period but grew considerably in the anarchic conditions that prevailed in the early 1990s. Furthermore, while the southern Caucasus states have been able to achieve some level of stability in the recent past, areas of the north continue to suffer from extensive instability, conflict, and violence. Despite Soviet disintegration, Russia has retained an ability to influence and interfere in events in both the north and south, along with an attendant interest in doing so.[15] This comes not only at these states' and republics' detriment but often to the detriment of Russian security and stability as the conflict and violence that Russia supports spreads beyond its control.

The Privatization of Force

In the post-Soviet period, many states and republics were forced to create coercive organizations out of whole cloth. They did not have—at least not in sufficient quantity—security services that were independent of the Soviet security apparatus. That apparatus was no longer a concern in the south and had a limited presence in the north. In some cases, this meant that states had to rely on private military entrepreneurs, perhaps the only ones with enough money or influence to arm and organize large groups of people. In Georgia and Chechnya, for instance, the state leveraged private armies for the provision of security.[16] This strategy was problematic because most of these private armies had competing interests: first, to their leadership and the business practices in which they engaged and, second, to the state, which was often viewed as equal parts competitor and compatriot.[17] These armies were

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[15] Although pursued much differently and to a different degree, this relationship is not completely unlike Mexico's relationship with the United States.

[16] As Mark Galeotti argues, Chechen gunmen became state law-enforcement officers who were still "responsible to their clan elders" (Mark Galeotti, "'Brotherhoods' and 'Associates': Chechen Networks of Crime and Resistance," *Low Intensity Conflict and Law Enforcement*, Vol. 11, Nos. 2–3, Winter 2002, p. 342).

[17] See Zurcher, 2007, p. 229.

only intermittently controllable. As Christoph Zurcher argues, definitions of these actors as "states" or "rebels" often depended on which of the two was awarded status as sovereign: Criminal and military activities were barely distinguishable during this period.[18] As a result of their relationship with Caucasian states and because they controlled a large segment of the means of force in the post-Soviet period, paramilitaries grew in both economic and military power in the 1990s. Each type of power proved beneficial to the other and allowed these organizations to became what Svante Cornell and S. Frederick Starr have termed "virtual shadow economic conglomerates."[19]

The prevalence of armed paramilitary factions was troublesome. In Chechnya, private armies developed around warlords and, during the 1994–1996 conflict, were integrated into what was essentially a national army.[20] Although they *did* provide a perverse façade of order, they also later formed the foundation for the insurgent army that fought Russian forces in two incredibly bloody conflicts. These organizations' means of supporting themselves contributed to the region's insecurity. They were funded by diaspora communities, including Chechen gangs operating throughout Russia and even internationally, corrupt businesses, proceeds generated by protection rackets, and a host of other criminal activities.[21] In the 1990s, Georgia, like Chechnya, was also host to a number of armed factions, some of which were led by erstwhile private citizens. In post-Soviet Georgia, the National Guard, White Eagles, White Falcons, Black Panthers, Merab Kostava Society, and others were all used for the provision of security. Not surprisingly, these groups, like similar organizations throughout the Caucasus, had varying loyalties. When not doing the state's bidding, they took hostages, violently targeted civilians (e.g., beheading infants, raping, executing men in front of their families), and engaged in ram-

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[18] Zurcher, 2007, p. 215.

[19] Cornell and Starr, 2006, p. 41.

[20] See Charles Fairbanks, "The Weak State: Public and Private Armies in the Caucasus," *State Building and the Reconstruction of Shattered Societies*, Berkeley, Calif.: University of California, April 20, 1999, pp. 27–28.

[21] See Fairbanks, 1999, and Zurcher, 2007, pp. 218–219.

pant looting.[22] What made this situation worse was that these groups often had the imprimatur of official state sanction, which further confused already murky political and security conditions.

Pervasive Corruption

Corruption in the post-Soviet Caucasus has been endemic. While much of it was inherited from the Soviet era,[23] the lawlessness and conflict of the Caucasus in the early 1990s allowed it to flourish. Vast criminal enterprises, not wholly unlike the VDTOs in Mexico, deeply penetrated state structures and operated enormous smuggling and trafficking networks, many of which supported other groups that were violently competing for power and influence in the region. As Louise Shelley argues, many long-established crime groups survived throughout this period and beyond principally because of the relationships they established with state governments and politicians.[24] Participants in Caucasus crime-corruption networks have variously included Russian peacekeepers; local, state, and national politicians; law-enforcement agents; and veritable armies of the otherwise unemployed.[25] The diversity of participants blurred the distinctions between legitimate and illegitimate actors or legal and illegal activities that would, in a different place and at a different time, have been transparent.[26]

Corruption has remained a significant cause for apprehension and disquiet throughout the Caucasus, even after fairly effective reforms were instituted in the south in the early 2000s, particularly

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[22] Frederik Coene, *The Caucasus: An Introduction*, New York: Routledge, 2010, p. 140.

[23] This is particularly true for Georgia. See Glenn E. Curtis, "Former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe," *Nations Hospitable to Organized Crime and Terrorism*, Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, October 2003, p. 59.

[24] Louise Shelley, "The Unholy Trinity: Transnational Crime, Corruption, and Terrorism," *Brown Journal of World Affairs*, Vol. 11, No. 2, Winter–Spring 2005a, p. 102.

[25] See Louise Shelley, "Georgian Organized Crime," in Louise Shelley, Erik R. Scott, and Anthony Latta, eds., *Organized Crime and Corruption in Georgia*, New York: Routledge, 2007, p. 58.

[26] See Kukhianidze, Kupatadze, and Gotsiridze, 2007, pp. 79–80.

in Georgia.[27] A 2002 opinion poll found that 90 percent of Armenians viewed corruption as a serious problem and identified the government as the source.[28] Armenians are not alone in their concerns, and little has changed over the past decade. According to Transparency International's 2012 Corruption Perceptions Index,[29] which surveyed 174 nations, the South Caucasus states are a mixed bag. For example, Georgia ranked number 51 (between Rwanda and Seychelles), a marked improvement since 2004, when it was ranked near the bottom of the list.[30] Armenia ranked number 105 (tied with Mexico, Algeria, and Bolivia). Azerbaijan was the worst of the three, with a rank of 139 (behind Russia, Kazakhstan, Iran, Honduras, Guyana, and Comoros and tied with Kenya, Nepal, Nigeria, and Pakistan).

In the North Caucasus, corruption and bribery remain significant problems.[31] As a constituent of Russia, the region received a ranking of 133 on the Corruption Perceptions Index, though if this area were separated from Russia for the purposes of assessing corruption, it would arguably rank much higher. Corruption in the north is particularly worrisome because it allows money to be redirected to politicians and criminals who already control vast sums and hold significant political influence.[32] Both the diversion of money through corrupt practices and the underwriting of private armies have had an adverse impact on the economic reconstruction of the North Caucasus. For instance, the Russian government recently made substantial subsidies available to the north's republics, much of which was earmarked for rebuild-

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[27] Richard Giragosian, "Networks of Crime and Corruption in the South Caucasus," *Caucasus Analytical Digest*, No. 9, Zurich, Switzerland: International Relations and Security Network, September 17, 2009, p. 2.

[28] Curtis, 2003, p. 57.

[29] Transparency International, Corruption Perceptions Index, 2012.

[30] Transparency International, Corruption Perceptions Index, 2004.

[31] See Theodore P. Gerber and Sarah E. Mendelson, "Security Through Sociology: The North Caucasus and the Global Counterinsurgency Paradigm," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 32, No. 9, 2009, p. 843.

[32] Domitilla Sagramoso, "Violence and Conflict in the Russian North Caucasus," *International Affairs*, Vol. 83, No. 4, 2007, p. 689.

ing infrastructure and undertaking other large construction projects. A significant portion of this funding has instead been siphoned off by corrupt government officials.[33] Thus, money that was intended to generate employment and opportunity has instead been reinvested into the political-criminal apparatus that provokes continual unrest and violence.

Russia Retains Its Influence

Although Russia largely withdrew from the Caucasus in the early 1990s, it has retained significant influence throughout the region. Much of this influence is derived from historical ties, ethnic linkages, investments, the granting of subsidies, and the underwriting of trade agreements. But, and perhaps most consequentially, Russia retains its influence in the region by manipulating the political process and by threatening or actually employing force.

Immediately after the breakup of the Soviet Union, many of the politicians and other power brokers who emerged in the region were, in their previous lives, Soviet officials and communist party *apparatchiks*. These leaders had long-held ties to Moscow and the Kremlin and thus had a natural affinity for Russia and tended to have a parallel worldview, which was reflected in their styles of governance and in their policy choices. Over time, Moscow's influence waned, though Russia still maintained an ability to influence if not outright "orchestrate" political victories for the candidates of its choice.[34] Despite losing direct control over affairs in the South Caucasus, Russia remains a key player—witness its interventions in Georgia over the past decade—and it has in the past acted to block or undermine agreements made in the region and, on occasion, to destabilize elected governments.[35]

Russia's influence and imposition of force in the north, where it is still the nominal sovereign despite the quasi-autonomy and "breakaway" status of many of these republics, while obviously significant, has not

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[33] See "From Moscow to Mecca," *The Economist*, April 7, 2011.

[34] See, in particular, the discussion of Akhmet Kadyrov's 2003 election in Sagramoso, 2007, p. 688.

[35] See Yalowitz and Cornell, 2004, p. 112.

been particularly effectual. Variously, Russia has stationed hundreds of thousands of military and security personnel in the North Caucasus.[36] But its inability to provide either justice or rule of law breeds and feeds conflict in such places as Dagestan and Ingushetia,[37] as well as in other areas of the north. This is partly because political and economic conditions in these republics have been dire for too long, and the violence in the region is too widespread. Furthermore, the brutal tactics that Russian forces have employed often evoke rage and vengeance rather than obedience and subservience.[38] Russia's inability to provide stability or to effectively enforce the law also stems from the fact that many of its forces are engaged in criminal activity as opposed to operating as peacekeepers.[39] For instance, Russian troops have reportedly engaged in illegal commerce with Chechen rebels in the north, and, in the South, they have allegedly been involved in protection and extortion rackets and other money-making schemes.[40]

Russian influence and interference in the Caucasus has had three significant negative consequences for the region as a whole. First, Russian interference disrupts the relationship between the states and republics of the Caucasus and the people they are charged with governing. Second, the deployment of military and law-enforcement personnel to the region has created even greater levels of instability and violence. In

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[36] See the discussion in Dunlop and Menon, 2006, p. 110.

[37] "Islam Inflamed," *The Economist*, April 7, 2011.

[38] Andrew C. Kuchins, Matthew Malarkey, and Sergey Markendonov, *The North Caucasus: Russia's Volatile Frontier*, Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, March 2011, p. 19. The authors argue that a "trigger experience," such as police harassment, abuse, or other violence perpetrated by security services, drove many to join the insurgencies in the north (p. 13).

[39] Jennifer D. P. Moroney and Theodore W. Karasik, "Case Study: The North Caucasus," in Angel Rabasa, Steven Boraz, Peter Chalk, Kim Cragin, Theodore W. Karasik, Jennifer D. P. Moroney, Kevin A. O'Brien, and John E. Peters, *Ungoverned Territories: Understanding and Reducing Terrorism Risks*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MG-561-AF, 2007, p. 231.

[40] See Moroney and Karasik, 2007, pp. 225–226, and Curtis, 2003, p. 59. Being poorly paid and impoverished certainly does not help Russian soldiers avoid the temptation to cooperate with drug traffickers and other criminals.

some cases, and notably in Georgia, Russian forces have been used to prop up separatist movements and "proto-states" that breed further disorder not only in the Caucasus but in western Russia as well.[41] Third, when Russian forces are deployed, in ways similar to Mexico's federal forces, they often engage in barbaric behaviors and gross human rights violations. It is also the case that these forces—many times poorly paid if they are paid at all—become engaged in the corruption, criminality, and lawlessness they are ostensibly deployed to mitigate.

Economic Failure

Economic conditions in the Caucasus in the late and post-Soviet periods were abysmal. This was largely a byproduct of the Soviet command economy, which did not allow market forces or consumer demand to dictate either prices or production for the better part of four decades. Additionally, because such institutions were unnecessary in a command economy, administrative, fiscal, financial, or commercial capacity or capability was practically nonexistant and could not help ease the transition to free markets.[42] Many of the economies of the Caucasus republics—and elsewhere in the Commonwealth of Independent States—were wholly unprepared for the introduction of even modest amounts of free trade. Few republics or states possessed the structures, laws, policies, industries, or bureaucratic knowledge needed to ensure economic stability, let alone growth, during the transition. This problem was compounded by the emergence of conflict throughout the region; conflict fomented further societal disruption, internal displacement, emigration, and the growth or emergence of informal and illicit economies. Political, economic, and martial competition between governments and nonstate actors ensued as each sought to control populations, power, and resources in the post-Soviet Caucasus.

During the Soviet period and especially in its later years, many of the Caucasus republics suffered from weakening economic output,

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[41] See the discussion in Stephen Blank, "The Lessons of War: Chechnya, the Caucasus, Russia," in George S. Toler, ed., *Chechnya Still Boiling*, New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2010, pp. 39–40.

[42] See Herzig, 1999, p. 22.

decaying industries, and distorted production policies. Basic services, many foodstuffs, and other commonly consumed items were difficult to come by, if they could be obtained at all. Corruption and bribery in the economic and political spheres were nearly ubiquitous. Corruption, combined with gross shortages of consumer goods and other basic services, led to the development of extensive—and durable—black markets, or "second-economy" systems of trade.[43] Criminal groups, organized and otherwise, exploited significant gaps in the Soviet economy to provide products and services that satisfied "unmet consumer demand."[44] They also used a large portion of this money to further develop patronage networks and, later, to support their own private armies and paramilitary organizations in a fashion mirrored by the behavior of Mexico's VDTOs. Many of these armies were later incorporated into successor states' and republics' defense and police establishments.

When the Soviet Union dissolved, its successor republics in the Caucasus experienced even greater economic hardship: Subsidies from Moscow, if they were still granted, were trimmed substantially; industrial output declined; energy was in short supply; inflation ensued; and standards of living fell quickly as unemployment rose and per capita GDP fell.[45] Few basic needs were being met by state governments or by the distribution networks or industries that they had controlled. As a result, preexisting informal and illicit markets grew quickly to

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[43] Joseph Serio, "Georgian Mafiya," in Frank G. Shanty and Patit Paban Mishra, eds., *Organized Crime: From Trafficking to Terrorism*, Vol. 1, Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, 2008b. See also Audrey L. Alstadt, "Azerbaijan's Struggle Toward Democracy," in Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott, eds., *Conflict, Cleavage, and Change in Central Asia and the Caucasus*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 116.

[44] Shelley, 2007, p. 55. Also see the discussion in Henze, 1993, p. 13.

[45] See Vladimer Papava, "Qualitative Economic Features of the South Caucasian Countries: Past, Present and Future in the European Context," in Fariz Ismailzade and Glen E. Howard, eds., *The South Caucasus 2021: Oil, Democracy and Geopolitics*, Washington, D.C.: Jamestown Foundation, 2012, p. 65. See also Coene, 2010, pp. 188–189. For a discussion of Georgia's path to democratization and its economic difficulties, see Darrell Slider, "Democratization in Georgia," in Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott, eds., *Conflict, Cleavage, and Change in Central Asia and the Caucasus*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 190.

not only meet needs and wants but also to absorb excess labor capacity and productive capital from severely distorted and underdeveloped economies.[46] Many of the leading actors in the development of the post-Soviet marketplace in the Caucasus were already well entrenched in politics, the informal and illicit economies, the military, or all three prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union. Sometimes, these groups cooperated with one another in their plunder of the state; other times, they engaged each other in violent competition.[47] The corrupt and often criminal networks that they developed and controlled effectively supplanted existing or formed nascent market structures.[48]

The emergence of large-scale conflict and episodic violence throughout the Caucasus in the early 1990s only fueled the already growing informal and illicit markets as economic output declined precipitously and as areas outside of government control became important gateways for illegal trade.[49] In essence, they were the only markets in the early post-Soviet period.[50] These markets were both places where people could buy and sell necessities or other staples of everyday life and ungoverned spaces that acted as clearinghouses for drugs, small arms, ammunition, heavy weaponry, women, labor, and even radioactive and nuclear materials.[51] It should be noted that the proceeds that these economies generated helped fuel continued conflict as part of a

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[46] See Gillinskiy and Kostjukovsky, 2006, p. 181.

[47] On the criminalization of the Georgian government and the competition between poorly paid law enforcement and organized crime groups, see Alexandre Kukhianidze, "Corruption and Organized Crime in Georgia Before and After the 'Rose Revolution,'" *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 28, No. 2, June 2009, p. 221.

[48] See Coene, 2010, p. 189.

[49] See Cornell, 2005a, p. 64.

[50] See Cassady Craft, "Reconciling Disparate Views on Caucasus Security: Nonproliferation at a Vital Crossroads," in Gary K. Bertsch, Cassady Craft, Scott A. Jones, and Michael Beck, eds., *Crossroads and Conflict: Security and Foreign Policy in the Caucasus and Central Asia*, New York: Routledge, 2007, p. 229.

[51] See Giragosian, 2009, p. 2; Shelley, 2007, p. 62; Glenn E. Curtis, *Involvement of Russian Organized Crime Syndicates, Criminal Elements in the Russian Military, and Regional Terrorist Groups in Narcotics Trafficking in Central Asia, the Caucasus, and Chechnya*, Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, October 2002, p. 57; and Sonia Ben Ouagrham-Gormley,

self-perpetuating economic-criminal-conflict system. A rather unfortunate derivative of this system was the deepening social, political, and economic entrenchment of the organized criminals who were its beneficiaries, the further corrosion of state institutions, and the crowding out of legitimate economic activity,[52] which was necessary for the proper functioning of the region's states and republics.

Chechnya and the North

Chechnya's criminal economy, perhaps the most developed and influential of the North Caucasus republics, predates the breakup of the Soviet Union. Joseph Serio notes that the Chechen organized crime community began to grow in 1987 and, by the late 1980s or early 1990s, had successfully taken control of a number of otherwise licit businesses, including hotels, auto repair shops, and even furniture distribution networks.[53] Over time, and in response to market demands and opportunities, Chechen-run organizations further diversified their criminal portfolios: They became involved in contract killings, bombings, kidnappings, narcotics trafficking, and arms smuggling.[54]

By 1994, when the official Chechen economy was falling apart and as the first Chechen conflict started, Chechen gangs and crime groups were reaping enormous profits from the narcotics trade, the theft and sale of stolen automobiles, and bank fraud, counterfeiting,

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"An Unrealized Nexus? WMD-Related Trafficking, Terrorism, and Organized Crime in the Former Soviet Union," *Arms Control Today*, July–August 2007.

[52] See Phil Williams, "Criminalization and Stability in Central Asia and South Caucasus," in Olga Oliker and Thomas S. Szayna, eds., *Faultlines of Conflict in Central Asia and the South Caucasus: Implications for the U.S. Army*, Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, MR-1598-A, 2003, p. 79, and Shelley, 2007, p. 55.

[53] Joseph Serio, "Chechen Criminal Gangs," in Frank G. Shanty and Patit Paban Mishra, eds., *Organized Crime: From Trafficking to Terrorism*, Vol. 1, Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, 2008a, p. 454.

[54] For discussion, see Louise Shelley, "Contemporary Russian Organised Crime: Embedded in Russian Society," in Cyrille Fijnaut and Letizia Paoli, eds., *Organised Crime in Europe: Concepts, Patterns and Control Policies in the European Union and Beyond*, Norwell, Mass.: Springer 2006a, p. 571, and Serio, 2008a, p. 454.

and other criminal financial schemes.[55] Their presence was so pervasive in Russia (and, later, elsewhere), and they were generating so much money—much of which was used to fund the conflict back in Chechnya—that Russian law-enforcement agencies were compelled to crack down on Chechen gangs even in Moscow.[56] The money that Chechen gangs and organized crime groups generated through the drug trade, illegal oil production, and a range of other illegal activities was used to fund successive conflicts in Chechnya, as well as insurgencies and conflicts in other areas of the North Caucasus.[57]

Georgia and the South

Georgia was the lynchpin of the informal and illicit economy of the South Caucasus in the post-Soviet period. Historically, because of its prime geographic location on the Caucasus land bridge and along the eastern Black Sea, it has served as an axis of trade between Russia and the Middle East. Georgia retained this role after it achieved independence, but illicit goods accounted for much of the trade across its borders, and much of the money from this trade went to perpetuating the conflict in that country and in the Caucasus as a whole.

Georgia—including the breakaway areas of Abkhazia and South Ossetia—was, and to a far lesser degree still is, host to a number of criminal gangs, syndicates, cartels, and unions engaged in just about every criminal enterprise imaginable: banditry, robbery, racketeering, credit plundering, kidnapping, theft of government property, food smuggling, fraud, narcotics trafficking, gambling, prostitution,

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[55] Richard H. Shultz, Jr., and Andrea J. Dew, *Insurgents, Terrorists, and Militias: The Warriors of Contemporary Conflict*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2006, p. 123. See also Serguei Celoukhine and M. R. Haberfeld, *Russian Organized Corruption Networks and Their International Trajectories*, New York: Springer, 2011, p. 98.

[56] See Galeotti, 2002, p. 344; Shelley, 2005a, p. 103; and Chris Dishman, "Terrorism, Crime, and Transformation," *Studies in Conflict and Terorism*, Vol. 24, No. 1, 2001, pp. 54–55.

[57] See Louise Shelley, "The Drug Trade in Contemporary Russia," *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 2006b; Robert W. Schaefer, *The Insurgency in Chechnya and the North Caucasus: From Gazavat to Jihad*, Santa Barbara, Calif.: Praeger Security International, 2011; and Dunlop and Menon, 2006.

money laundering, and assorted violence.[58] Organized crime groups have traded just about everything from fuel and cigarettes to scrap metal, weapons, drugs, and even radioactive materials.[59] From 1992 through the early 2000s, Georgia's black market accounted for an estimated 60–70 percent of the country's economic activity, from which the Georgian government saw little tax revenue.[60] Between 1998 and 2003, Georgia's already significant illicit economy grew considerably as criminal groups, insurgents, politicians, and law-enforcement officials became heavily engaged in the contraband trade.[61]

The Present

Even as the post-Soviet economies of the South Caucasus somewhat stabilized in the mid-2000s, the economies in the north remained bad or got worse: Unemployment and poverty have been high, economic crimes have risen, and Russian federal budget expenditures make up the bulk of these republics' economies.[62] The conflict in the north has been persistent, formal economies have not had the opportunity to grow, and the parties to the conflict often benefit from the conflict and illicit activities. Russian troops deployed throughout the north and the rebel forces that act in collusion with them earn extra money and fund

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[58] For a discussion of the different types of organized crime groups in Georgia and their activities, see Georgi Glonti, "Problems Associated with Organized Crime in Georgia," *Trends in Organized Crime*, Vol. 9, No. 2, Winter 2005, pp. 68–71.

[59] See Alexandre Kukhianidze, "Organized Crime and Smuggling Through Abkhazia and South Ossetia," in Sami Nevala and Kauko Aromaa, eds., *Organized Crime, Trafficking, Drugs: Papers Presented at the Annual Conference of the European Society of Criminology, Helsinki, 2003*, Helsinki, Finland: European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control, 2004, pp. 93–94; Craft, 2007, p. 231; Shelley, 2007, p. 62; Curtis, 2002, p. 4; and Nichol, 2007, p. 9.

[60] Glonti, 2005, p. 71.

[61] See Kukhianidze, 2004, p. 88.

[62] See Moroney and Karasik, 2007, pp. 212, 220; Kuchins, Malarkey, and Markendonov, 2011, pp. 14–15; and Jim Nichol, *Stability in Russia's Chechnya and Other Regions of the North Caucasus: Recent Developments*, Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, December 13, 2010, p. 15. The Chechen economy, as of 2012, was "almost entirely dependent on subsidies from Moscow" (Octavian Manea and Robert W. Schaefer, "The Russian COIN Campaign in North Caucasus," *Small Wars Journal*, June 28, 2012).

their causes by operating the north's black market. It is estimated that approximately 55 percent of the North Caucasus economy is "unofficial" and that the shadow economy accounts for a "substantial" portion of the region's overall economic activity.[63] Persistently high unemployment drives youth to whatever employment is available; often, what is available is criminal.[64] Whatever wealth exists in the north is controlled by elites who maintain substantial patronage networks.[65] Not surprisingly, little if any of this wealth is dedicated to improving economic conditions in the North Caucasus.

The North Caucasus is in economic shambles, but not all is well in the south, either. Porous borders still pose a security challenge, and ungoverned spaces, particularly in Georgia, are still problematic. As in Mexico, the former permit or grant tacit sanction for continued criminal smuggling and trafficking, and the latter provide sanctuary and freedom of maneuver to insurgent and terrorist groups. While some criminal groups prefer stability and the development of partnerships with the state, much like those that Georgian criminals pursued in the decade following independence, others prefer instability, like the Chechens in the Pankisi Gorge during the second Chechen conflict.[66] As Louise Shelley argues, criminals and terrorists in the Caucasus exploit porous borders and uncontrolled territories, and neither has an interest in the "endurance of the state; rather, their profits are made by destabilizing the state and its structures."[67] So, while the South Caucasus might be in comparatively better economic shape that the north, it still provides ample space and hospitality for the operations of criminal and violent individuals and organizations.

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[63] Moroney and Karasik, 2007, p. 220; Kuchins, Malarkey, and Markendonov, 2011, p. 15.

[64] See Kukhianidze, Kuptadze, and Gotsiridze, 2007, p. 73.

[65] Dunlop and Menon, 2006, p. 105.

[66] See Curtis, 2003, p. 59.

[67] Shelley, 2007, p. 62. See also Shelley, 2005a, p. 101.

Replacing the State

Social organization in the Caucasus, like most aspects of Soviet life, was controlled by the Soviet bureaucracy. Organizations that would fall under the rubric of civil society either were not permitted to exist in the Soviet Union or were tightly regulated by the state. Thus, when the Soviet Union ceased to exist, there were few if any "organizations" that people could look to for support: Crime and violence were rampant, economies were in shambles, and what social norms and community values existed were disintegrating.[68] Many criminal groups and other nefarious actors stepped in to fill the institutional and organizational void that emerged. Informal patrimonial networks quickly arose to organize the more than 100 ethnic groups that make up the Caucasus citizenry.[69]

In the absence of the state, many people organized themselves and their activities around the goals and characteristics that they held in common. Accordingly, given the prevalence of poor economic conditions and violence in the Caucasus in the early 1990s, many of the organizations that populations developed or joined were criminal in nature or martial in character. Paramilitary groups, which often funded themselves through corrupt practices and criminal activities,[70] became the axes of many communities. These groups emerged throughout the region but were especially prevalent in Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Chechnya. Kinship, communal ties, and socioprofessional networks provided cohesion under this new social order.[71]

Kinship was a particularly useful basis for organization because it built upon established relationships, trust, and blood ties. As Mark Galeotti notes, kinship offered a "practical alternative to the state in so many ways, from protection (especially through the threat of the feud)

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[68] This applied to organized crime groups as well. See the discussion of the *qurdebi* in Georgia in Gavin Slade, "The Georgian Mafia," *Caucasus Analytical Digest*, Vol. 9, September 17, 2009, p. 7.

[69] See Cornell and Starr, 2006, p. 41.

[70] See Zurcher, 2007, p. 216.

[71] Kinship was perhaps most important of all in the Caucasus. See Zurcher, 2007, p. 216; Herzig, 1999, pp. 20–21; and Moroney and Karasik, 2007, p. 212.

to economic opportunity."[72] Chechnya, in particular, illustrated the power of kinship as an organizational concept in the post-Soviet Caucasus. Chechen organized crime networks were centered on kinship,[73] as were Chechen drug-trafficking groups. Combined with the Chechen penchant for resistance and conflict, code of honor (or *adat*), and warrior ethic, kinship was a powerful motivator not only for conflict but also for the criminal activities that funded its prosecution.[74]

The "state" in many areas of the Caucasus was essentially replaced by a malignant civil society—one organized not around recreational activities, volunteerism, or hobbies but around crime, disorder, and violence. It should be noted that citizens did not perceive these groups as necessarily bad. They provided much-needed services, and these "mafias," as they were sometimes called, formed social, political, and economic frameworks for the post-Soviet Caucasus.[75]

Violence in the Caucasus

The violence that has plagued the Caucasus region has been the product of the substantial political, social, and economic upheaval spurred by the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the sudden independence or quasi-independence of many of its former republics. This has been most manifestly expressed in a series of wars and conflicts that have raged over the past 20-plus years in Chechnya (1994–1996, 1999–2000, and 2000–2009); Nagorno Karabakh (1988–1994); Abkhazia (1992–1993

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[72] Galeotti, 2002, p. 342.

[73] See Galeotti, 2002, p. 346.

[74] See Galeotti, 2002, p. 340. For further discussion of the Chechen warrior ethic, see Shultz and Dew, 2006, pp. 111–112. In recent years, religion has proved nearly as powerful an organizational concept and motivator. See Robert Bruce Ware and Enver Kisriev, *Dagestan: Russian Hegemony and Islamic Resistance in the North Caucasus*, Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharp, 2010, p. 213; Moroney and Karasik, 2007, p. 222; Sagramoso, 2007, p. 690; and Kuchins, Malarkey, and Markendonov, 2011, p. 13.

[75] For more on these perceptions, see Shelley, 2005a, p. 107. For a discussion of Georgia, see Shelley, 2007, p. 56. For a discussion of Armenia, see Nora Dudwick, "Political Transformations in Postcommunist Armenia: Images and Reality," in Karen Dawish and Bruce Parrott, eds., *Conflict, Cleavage, and Change in Central Asia and the Caucasu*s, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 70.

and 1998); South Ossetia (1980s–ongoing); Georgia (1991–1993, 1998, and 2008); North Ossetia (early 1990s); and between Armenia and Azerbaijan in the late 1980s.[76] Unlike the simmering violence punctuated by sporadic street battles in Mexico, violence in the Caucasus often involved significant numbers of combatants and heavy military weaponry. Although the duration of many of these battles could be measured in days or weeks, others continued for years.

Few groups involved in the conflict and violence in the Caucasus have had to search very far to come up with reasons to fight one another: separatist/nationalist impulses, long-simmering ethnic and religious tensions, reaction to abuses by the state, vendettas, and criminal competition have all been cause for conflict and continued violence. Furthermore, the tools for engaging in conflict and violence have not been in short supply. The Caucasus was awash with small arms after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and larger and more capable weapons systems were later available for purchase.[77]

Open warfare among competing parties' armed forces (e.g., between Chechnyan insurgents and Russia, between Georgia and Russia, and between Georgia and Russian-supported separatist groups) has accounted for a large part of the violence in the region over the past two decades. Lower-intensity conflict, economic violence, and murder have also plagued the Caucasus as well. In fact, these smaller-scale battles have arguably been more problematic, given that they contribute to durable instability and chronic social problems. Chechnya, in particular, has been a hotbed for both open warfare and persistent lower-level violence.

After nearly 20 years of conflict and ancillary activities supporting this conflict, violence has become ingrained in Chechnya in much the way it has in Afghanistan and, to a lesser degree, in certain parts of Mexico and other places where violence is a part of everyday life. Like

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[76] Coene, 2010, p. 165. See also Hooman Peimani, *Conflict and Security in Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, 2009, pp. 241–242.

[77] In 1991, the Soviet Army flooded local arms markets with cheap weapons and, later, armored personnel carriers, heavy weapons, and grenade launchers. By the 2000s, Chechen fighters had acquired anti-aircraft systems. See Zurcher, 2007, p. 217; Kukhianidze, 2009, pp. 218–219; and Yalowitz and Cornell, 2004, p. 107.

in Mexico, small-arms ownership in Chechnya is commonplace; it is assumed that even young teens are armed.[78] Chechen gangs and other supporters in Russia and elsewhere often come into violent conflict with other ethnic gangs and criminal organizations.[79] The activities of this international population also generate funds to support conflicts in their home communities. Rampant criminality, warlordism, chaotic violence, and general lawlessness have all been prevalent.[80] Brutal violence has been employed by all sides in Chechnya over the years: Severed heads have been left on roadsides by Chechen militants, and law-enforcement officials have been accused of committing summary executions and burning people alive in their cars.[81] Vengeance killings in Chechnya have not been uncommon. Chechen fighters have been known to track Russian plane markings so that they could later find the crew's families and take vengeance upon them.[82] Violence and criminality have become a way of life, particularly in Chechnya but also in other quarters of the North Caucasus.

Although much of the violence in the North Caucasus was limited to Chechnya in the 1990s and early 2000s, terrorist attacks and insurgent activities have recently spread elsewhere in the north.[83] The most recent and significant spate of violence in the region has occurred in nearby republics where Russian military and law enforcement are engaged in an ongoing struggle against separatist movements and Islamists. Police brutality and Russian forces' "mop-up operations,"

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[78] See Moroney and Karasik, 2007, p. 229.

[79] See Glenny, 2008, pp. 62, 65.

[80] Mark Kramer, "Guerrilla Warfare, Counterinsurgency and Terrorism in the North Caucasus: The Military Dimension of the Russian-Chechen Conflict," *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 57, No. 2, March 2005, p. 210.

[81] See Thomas de Waal, "Chechnya: The Breaking Point," in George S. Toler, ed., *Chechnya Still Boiling*, New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2010, and Feifer, 2011.

[82] Shultz and Dew, 2006, p. 113.

[83] For further discussion, see Kuchins, Malarkey, and Markendonov, 2011, p. 1. See also John O'Loughlin, Edward C. Holland, and Frank D. W. Witmer, "The Changing Geography of Violence in Russia's North Caucasus, 1999–2011: Regional Trends and Local Dynamics in Dagestan, Ingushetia, and Kabardino-Balkaria," *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, Vol. 52, No. 5, 2011.

referred to as *zachistkas*—in which young men are arbitrarily detained, tortured, and often made to disappear—have elicited counterattacks directed against civilians and government officials.[84] Much of the recent violence in Dagestan and elsewhere in the North is argued to be a response to poverty, police brutality, and religious intolerance.[85]

While the locus of conflict in the North Caucasus has shifted away from Chechnya, much of the area's current violence is nonetheless a long-term diffusion from the Chechen conflicts. As John O'Loughlin and Frank Witmer argue, violence in the north has declined in absolute terms, but it is migrating outward.[86] Insurgent, guerrilla, and terrorist activities seem to have bled out from Chechnya and Ingushetia into Dagestan, Kabardino-Balkaria, and Stavropol as autonomous violent Islamic groups, called *jamaats*, have become active in the region.[87] In 2009 and 2010, there were well over 1,000 reported incidents of violence in the North Caucasus.[88] Many of these incidents were mujahideen attacks on civilians and government officials and took the form of suicide and roadside bombings, while others—including abductions, disappearances, and various human rights abuses—were perpetrated by state security forces.[89] Thus, although the current level of violence in the Caucasus may be at post-Soviet lows, violence nonetheless persists and still causes significant societal disruption.

For more than a decade, Chechnya and the surrounding region has been a major theater of operations for jihadist groups and foreign fighters. In Chechnya, what started as a fight for independence was transformed by the Chechens' need for international support and the willingness of foreign Islamists to support the Chechen cause. The result was a struggle for the establishment of an Islamic state in the Cauca-

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[84] Sagramoso, 2007, pp. 699–702.

[85] Kuchins, Malarkey, and Markendonov, 2011, pp. 3–4.

[86] John O'Loughlin and Frank D. W. Witmer, "The Diffusion of Violence in the North Caucasus of Russia, 1999–2010," undated.

[87] See Nichol, 2010, p. 4, and Sagramoso, 2007, p. 681.

[88] Nichol, 2010, p. 3.

[89] Nichol, 2010, pp. 2, 13.

sus. Outside funding grew dramatically during the First Chechen War, and Chechnya became a magnet for foreign jihadists. Religion played a major role in the Second Chechen War, as large numbers of foreign and domestic Islamists participated in the conflict and expanded their influence among the Chechen factions. The rebel movement was deprived of its moderate counterbalance to extremism after Russian forces killed Chechen president Aslan Maskhadov in 2005. Since 2007, the Caucasus Emirate, an umbrella organization of North Caucasus *jamaats* and heavily influenced by al-Qaeda, has carried on a terrorist campaign against Russia that has included attacks on the Moscow Metro and Domodedovo Airport.[90]

What Was Done to Improve the Situation?

Over the past 20 years, the South Caucasus states have been able to create modest stability, improve their economies, and take steps to significantly reduce violence in their territories. Many of these problems had been a product of poor economic conditions and the insufficient or corrupt provision of security by inchoate and, later, poorly managed state forces. These states were able to make such progress as a result of their *de jure* independence from Russia and through trade agreements and investment, military, and financial aid from the European Union, NATO, and the United States. The emergence of civil society groups, NGOs, and media outlets—long suppressed by the Soviet Union or kept in the hands of powerful elites—also played a role in improving citizens' lives. These organizations provided aid and support and played a key part in exposing the corruption that was a symptom of many of the south's social, economic, and security ills.

Perhaps the most significant improvement was the series of reforms that followed Georgia's Rose Revolution, which took place in 2003. The Rose Revolution led to the removal Eduard Shevardnadze, the election of Mikheil Saakashvili, and a number of reforms intended to reduce the prevalence of organized crime and corruption, which threatened Georgia's national security and of the security of the south as a whole.

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[90] Rabasa, Boraz, et al., 2007, pp. 222–229; Mapping Militant Organizations Project, "Caucasus Emirate," Stanford University, last updated August 9, 2012.

Of particular importance was the Georgian government's decision to remove more than 16,000 law-enforcement personnel from their positions for their involvement in organized crime. While many of those removed eventually joined criminal organizations, as Louise Shelley describes it, the strategy "broke the institutional bonds between the law enforcement personnel and the criminals at the operational level."[91] Thus, while this reform did not completely solve the problem of corruption and crime,[92] it did remove many of the law-enforcement officials who were tied to organized crime. It also paved the way for future policies designed to combat organized crime, some of which were imported from the United States and Italy.[93] Other improvements, such as the simplification of Georgia's regulatory framework, tax reform, and the tighter management of public finances, were also beneficial.[94]

Although the South Caucasus states still suffer from a security deficit and intermittent violence, they are far better off than they were in the early post-Soviet period. In contradistinction, the situation in the North Caucasus has not been so sanguine. The north still suffers from significant economic problems and a substantial security deficit: Violence is common and its perpetrators are many. And while Russia's massive imposition of force finally achieved some degree of success in Chechnya, the north's woes seemed to merely shift from Chechnya to other republics that, like the Chechens before them, suffer from and seek vengeance for Russia's heavy-handed tactics and brutal treatment. Almost none of the reforms or improvements in Georgia or elsewhere in the south were repeated in the north. If anything, the problems that emerged there in the early 1990s were only exacerbated by Russia's reckless internal security policies, brutal and corrupt law-enforcement

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[91] Shelley, 2007, p. 63.

[92] It was significantly reduced. See Kukhianidze, 2009, pp. 230–231. Some corruption was now monopolized by agents of the state. See Alexander Kupatadze, "Georgia's Fight Against Organized Crime: Success or Failure?" *Caucasus Analytical Digest*, Vol. 9, September 17, 2009, p. 11.

[93] See Slade, 2009, p. 7, and Kupatadze, 2009, p. 11.

[94] See Kupatadze, 2009, p. 10.

practices, and inability or unwillingness to address increasingly poor economic conditions.

How Did It End Up?

The South Caucasus has been relatively stable, and violence and crime are not nearly as pervasive as they were in the decade following independence. The South Caucasus still suffers from population displacement and the ills associated with relatively porous borders. Corruption is a perennial problem. Tensions still fester in Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia, and Abkhazia, and a number of geographic areas remain poorly governed. The North Caucasus is much worse shape. Although much of the violence has subsided since its peak during the Chechen wars, it is still a significant problem. And although Chechnya is no longer the locus of large-scale conflict, its neighboring republics have seen a sharp rise in state-based, religiously motivated, and grievance-oriented violence. The economies of the North Caucasus are a veritable trainwreck, and criminality flourishes. Much like in Mexico, crime is often the only source of employment for the region's young men. Even if the grievances that contributed to the ongoing conflict in the north subsided, the criminal networks and profits generated by their activities in support of perpetual conflict provide a significant deterrent to any future, permanent resolution.[95] In any case, it is unlikely that these grievances will be resolved in the short term, especially given the prevalence of violent *jamaats* and the persistent human rights abuses perpetrated by Russian forces.

Similarities and Differences Between the Caucasus and Mexico

There are three key similarities between the Caucasus and Mexico: (1) few (positive) economic opportunities, (2) relatively widespread yet

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[95] Louise Shelly has noted that, in many cases, greed has supplanted grievance as a motivation in places like the Caucasus in 2005. See Louise Shelley, "Unraveling the New Criminal Nexus," *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 6, No. 1, Winter–Spring 2005b, p. 9.

local violence, and (3) the involvement of government forces (Russian forces, in the case of the Caucasus) in perpetrating violence. The differences between the Caucasus and Mexico are many, but three are particularly significant: (1) the Caucasus weathered the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the subsequent near-total absence of formal security forces and economic capacity; (2) unlike Mexico, the Caucasus is an enormously complex region with manifold state and national borders; and (3) the Caucasus is an amalgamate of people, religions, and ideologies unified only by a shared common heritage of Soviet domination.

Violence

If we set aside the open warfare of the post-Soviet period, the scale and scope of the violence that has plagued the Caucasus is not dissimilar from that in Mexico. Different areas at different times in the Caucasus have been subject to violence perpetrated by organized criminals, warlords, and state security services or their proxies. While the causes of this violence were many, a recurring theme was the competition between those orchestrating trade within the region's informal and illicit markets. Perhaps a saving grace for Mexico is that its criminal economy is fairly well cartelized. For this reason, the violence in that country—while widespread and the source of significant casualty counts—is linked to only a handful of organizations and even fewer illicit commodities. This is in contrast to the Caucasus, where nearly the entire economy was infested with criminal entrepreneurs with various specialties and interests.

Indiscriminate Mayhem or "Anomic Violence"

Indiscriminate mayhem or acts of anomic violence were largely absent from the conflict in the Caucasus. As a result, similarities and differences between the Caucasus and Mexico in this respect are not particularly relevant for our purposes.

Traditional Threat/Insurgency

Between 1992 and 1994, insurgencies were fought in both Georgia and Nagorno-Karabakh. Two years later, another Caucasian insurgency

erupted in Chechnya. In each of these conflicts, insurgents fought the ruling government in an effort to topple it and seize political power, in accordance with the general pattern of insurgency warfare in the post-Soviet Caucasus. In all three cases, the outcome was mixed but favored the insurgents. But in other parts of the region, security forces have been surprisingly effective in keeping conflicts at a low level of intensity, even while relying on draconian measures.

Ethnically Motivated Violence

The Caucasus is home to more than 100 different ethnic groups, and the region borders areas that are home to many others. These groups have different histories, cultures, and languages and, on more than one occasion, have been in conflict with one another. Mexico, by contrast, is nearly homogeneous although there are numerous indigenous groups, particularly in the southern and central states. Even the countries that it borders share more similarities with Mexico than differences. Outside of the wars and conflicts that occurred more a century ago or its recent Chiapas conflict, Mexico has not been subject to any significant ethnic or nationalist violence for a long period.

Lack of Economic Opportunities

Although Mexico's macroeconomic condition is far better than that of the Caucasus region as a whole or any Caucasus state in particular—then or now—it still offers only a few economic opportunities to a significant portion of its population. In the Caucasus, this situation led to substantial migration and high levels of unemployment or underemployment as workers turned to the region's enormous informal and illicit economies for income. This migration and shift in labor flows severely disrupted the Caucasus states' and republics' licit economies and their ability to generate revenue to form much-needed government institutions. It also meant that vast swaths of the population were swept up into the region's sizable criminal-economic-violence vortex.

Weapon Availability

Throughout the region, organized crime groups smuggle weapons and ammunition with ease. And as noted earlier, unlike the violence inter-

rupted by episodic street battles in Mexico, violence in the Caucasus frequently involved high numbers of combatants on both sides and heavy military weaponry. Along with small arms, heavy weapons have not been difficult to find in the Caucasus. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Caucasus was awash with weapon systems available to the highest bidder.[96]

Competition over a Resource

After the end of the Cold War, the subsequent easing of state controls in the Caucasus led indirectly to an outgrowth of organized crime. By trading in a range of resources—arms, money, food, drugs, fuel, and people—the criminals diversified their illicit portfolios. They also sought to insulate themselves from prosecution by joining forces with politicians to form crime-corruption networks.[97] Unlike in Mexico, however, narcotics do not dominate the illicit economy of the Caucasus and therefore the competition is not over *a* single resource, like cocaine. Rather, gangs and crime groups in the Caucasus focus on a bevy of schemes at once, including buying and selling stolen automobiles, committing bank fraud, counterfeiting, and engaging in other criminal financial schemes.[98] While some Mexican groups have diversified the drugs they traffick, and Los Zetas has expanded beyond narcotics to engage in kidnapping for ransom and extortion, most Mexican VDTOs remain engaged primarily in transshipping narcotics.

Ungoverned Spaces

Mexico is a fairly large nation bordered to the east and west by oceans; it also has numerous states and is geologically diverse, but its geographical complexity has not been a principal driver of insecurity or violence. The Caucasus Mountains and the forested areas that surround them have provided a safe haven for outlaws, criminals, insurgents, and ter-

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[96] Zurcher, 2007, p. 217; Kukhianidze, 2009, pp. 218–219; and Yalowitz and Cornell, 2004, p. 107.

[97] See Zaitseva, 2002, p. 171; Shelley, 1999; Williams, 2007; Arasli, 2007, p. 8; and Kukhianidze, Kupatadze, and Gotsiridze, 2007, pp. 74–78.

[98] Shultz and Dew, 2006, p. 123. See also Celoukhine and Haberfeld, 2011, p. 98.

rorists for quite some time. Even during the Soviet period, when the region's states had relatively firm control over their territories, these areas were difficult to monitor and control. In terms of political geography, the Caucasus is criss-crossed by a number of national—seven to Mexico's three—and state borders. Each border represents a line of demarcation where policies, laws, and state-provisioned capabilities differ. Criminals and others operating outside the law exploit these boundaries adroitly and are mobile enough to move from one area to the next, according to changes in circumstance or need. While Mexico has its own issues with porous borders to its north and south and poorly governed spaces within its territory, it is rare that its borders or territories are exploited in the ways or with the same frequency as the borders in the Caucasus.

State/Institutional Weakness

The effects of the Soviet Union's collapse still reverberate through the Caucasus today. The union's dissolution and Moscow's near-total withdrawal of economic, military, and law-enforcement support to the region allowed the worst elements of society to take hold in the Caucasus: Corruption flourished, organized crime dominated the economy, and violence erupted. It is difficult to overestimate the negative effects of the collapse on state structures in the region. It is equally difficult to imagine that a similar collapse or the symptoms of this collapse could be repeated in Mexico barring the total degeneration of Mexico's government. That said, although Mexico's government is not near collapse and still functions rather well, it is not capable of providing security throughout the whole of its territory. The areas where the Mexican government has little presence are not quite as lawless as their counterparts in the Caucasus, but they are nonetheless very insecure.

Whether security was overseen by official state services, the proxy private organizations hired in the wake of the Soviet Union's dissolution, or the corrupt officials on the payroll of the organized crime community, forces serving the governments of Caucasus region all played a role in the conduct of and perpetuation of violence in the post-Soviet period. This is especially true in the North Caucasus, where Russian security forces have been deployed for two decades and still are

engaged in fighting an undulating insurgency and various rebel movements. Furthermore, many of these forces were involved in human rights abuses and, on occasion, the outright slaughter of civilians. This has had two decidedly negative effects, which have also been witnessed in Mexico: (1) it provoked people, families, and communities to take revenge against the state, and (2) it engendered fear and mistrust of the state among its citizens. Neither result contributed to improved security.

Patronage/Corruption

The post-Soviet Caucasus has been plagued by endemic corruption, which was left to proceed unmolested for much of the past two decades. Like the VDTOs in Mexico, criminal groups in the Caucasus successfully penetrated state structures while controlling vast smuggling and trafficking networks. Many of these criminal networks colluded with or operated at the behest of other groups engaged in political violence, intimidation, and bribery.

Lessons for Mexico

The unleashing of violence following the dissolution of the Soviet Union and near-total economic and political collapse in the Caucasus is unlikely to ever occur in Mexico (or anywhere else in the near term, for that matter). And the origins of the violence in Mexico and in the Caucasus might not be the same, but patterns of behavior and the activities in which the violent organizations engage are. Therefore, the conflict and violence that the Caucasus region has experienced since 1991 are instructive and provide three key lessons for Mexico. First, the tactics that security forces employed in the Caucasus were brutal and seemed to accomplish little other than creating a climate of fear or engendering vengeance among the population. Brutality seemingly breeds brutality; at a bare minimum, it lowers the standards of a conflict so that it resembles a gang fight more than the organized imposition of force. It should be expected—and it is to a degree—that if Mexican citizens see the state as nearly the same type of threat as the

VDTOs, it is unlikely that they will enlist themselves in the Mexican government's fight. Second, borders and geographic spaces in the Caucasus (and elsewhere) are easy to exploit and will be exploited when they are left ungoverned. This is especially true during periods of war but also possible during periods of relative calm, such as when criminal and insurgent organizations regroup or engage in activities other than conflict. These havens or shelters have allowed conflict to simmer in the Caucasus for decades. It is reasonable to assume that if similar areas in Mexico are left "ungoverned," they will produce the same effects. Finally, criminal entrepreneurs will exploit poor economic conditions and high levels of unemployment, which could lead to even more serious economic troubles if not addressed quickly and comprehensively. For the most part, and in the absence of significant financial support from the state or elsewhere, people will find a means of subsisting, regardless of what sort of employment is necessary. This has already been seen in Mexico, which suffers from high unemployment and underemployment and where there are large informal and illicit economies. Perceptions of what is criminal and what is necessary will change rapidly when a person or their family's survival is at stake. Under these conditions, when criminal organizations come knocking with offers of work and pay, people answer the door. While the South Caucasus states were able to modestly address poor economic conditions and high unemployment, their counterparts in the north were not. Notably, the violence in the north continued, relatively unabated.[99]

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[99] In the North Caucasus, a substantial segment of the population views the Russian occupation as illegitimate, which is another factor driving the violence.

Somalia (1991–2010)

Case Selection Categories: Warlordism, Ungoverned Spaces

When scholars talk of weak, fragile, or failed states, these terms conjure images of conflict, violence, and crime compounded by the enduring challenges of weak state administration and hollowed-out bureaucracies. Conditions in Somalia, however, have led analysts of state failure to coin an even more descriptive term: *collapsed* states. Collapsed states are characterized by the rule of the strong, a vacuum of authority, and a "dark energy" that pushes the state into a veritable black hole in which political goods can be obtained only through private or ad hoc means.[1]

Throughout the 1990s and well into the 2000s, Somalia was the epitome of a collapsed state. Warfare between clans and subclans had led to a condition of anarchy. Warlords, terrorists, and militias were the law of the land (and pirates were the law of the sea). Somalia has been without a functional central government since 1991, the longest recorded tenure of state collapse in postcolonial history.[2] Since its creation in 2004, Somalia has frequently held the dubious distinction of being ranked first by the Fund for Peace on the Failed States Index.

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[1] Robert I. Rotberg, "Failed States, Collapsed States, Weak States: Causes and Indicators," in Robert I. Rotberg, ed., *State Failure and State Weakness in a Time of Terror*, Cambridge, Mass., and Washington, D.C.: World Peace Foundation and Brookings Institution Press, 2003, p. 9.

[2] Kenneth Menkhaus, "Somalia: Governance vs. Statebuilding," in Charles T. Call with Vanessa Wyeth, eds., *Building States to Build Peace*, Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 2008, p. 187.

Conflict and Violence in Somalia

Siad Barre's dictatorial regime was toppled after an 11-year insurgency waged by a collection of anti-government insurgents, including the Somali National Movement and the Somali Salvation Democratic Front. Almost immediately after Barre fled the country, the state collapsed and Somalia's capital, Mogadishu, became the scene of violent looting and humanitarian catastrophe, compounded by a lack of food, electricity, and clean water. The following are some notable statistics about the conflict:

- At the time of state collapse in 1991, about one-third of Somalia's population (estimated at between 8 million and 10 million people) were internally displaced.[3]
- Fighting over control of Mogadishu in 1991–1992 led to the deaths of at least 35,000 noncombatants.[4]
- Al-Qaeda has links to Somali Islamists dating back to the early 1990s, when Al-Qaeda operatives established training camps in the country following an agreement with the General Islamic Union, otherwise known as al-Ittihad al-Islami.[5]
- Somalia's economy is one of the poorest in the world, while its human development indicators are among the lowest as well.[6]
- By 1998, at an Egyptian-sponsored peace conference, 27 separate political-military factions were represented.[7]

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[3] Walter Clarke and Robert Gosende, "Somalia: Can a Collapsed State Reconstitute Itself?" in Robert I. Rotberg, ed., *State Failure and State Weakness in a Time of Terror*, Cambridge, Mass., and Washington, D.C.: World Peace Foundation and Brookings Institution Press, 2003, p. 132.

[4] Clarke and Gosende, 2003, p. 140.

[5] Ken Menkhaus and Jacob N. Shapiro, "Non-State Actors and Failed States: Lessons from Al Qa'ida's Experiences in the Horn of Africa," in Anne L. Clunan and Harold A. Trinkunas, eds., *Ungoverned Spaces: Alternatives to State Authority in an Era of Softened Sovereignty*, Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2010, p. 84.

[6] Menkhaus, 2008, p. 199.

[7] Ken Menkhaus, "Non-State Actors and the Role of Violence in Stateless Somalia," in Klejda Mulaj, ed., *Violent Non-State Actors in World Politics*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2010a, p. 351.

The Breakdown of Societal Norms and Unfettered Violence in the Early 1990s

From the end of the anti-Barre insurgency until the arrival of a U.S.-led UN peacekeeping contingent in December 1992, Somalia was engulfed in some of the worst violence ever witnessed in what had been an already bloody history marked by fighting between clans and subclans, blood feuds, and revenge killings. Still, nothing prepared Somali society for the level of anomie that accompanied a breakdown in the rules and taboos governing the use of violence in that country.

Explaining the Outbreak of Violence

The explosion of violence in Somalia in the 1990s was the direct legacy of a brutal, decade-long civil war in the 1980s in which the government committed various atrocities in an unsuccessful attempt to cling to power. The divide-and-rule tactics of the Barre regime pitted clans against each other and led to a competition for resources in an already resource-scarce environment.[8] Aerial bombardment of cities by mercenary pilots, scorched-earth tactics to exacerbate famine, collective punishment in the form of targeting fleeing civilians, and mass executions of entire subclans scarred the Somali national consciousness. Hence, widespread human rights abuses further militarized a society that already had a strong martial tradition.[9]

Violence begat further violence and came to be seen as the only guaranteed method of survival. Clan warfare, the control of resources, and the complete lack of any observable forms of governance further contributed to the zero-sum mindset of most Somalis political actors.[10] The cities of Mogadishu, Baidoa, and Kismayo soon became known throughout East Africa as points of a "triangle of death."[11]

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[8]   Ken Menkhaus, "Governance Without Government in Somalia: Spoilers, State Building, and the Politics of Coping," *International Security*, Vol. 31, No. 3, Winter 2006–2007, pp. 78–79.

[9]   Shultz and Dew, 2006, pp. 73–74.

[10]   Menkhaus, 2008, p. 189.

[11]   Clarke and Gosende, 2003, pp. 146–147.

Illicit Economy, Crime, and Violence

A common phenomenon in extremely violence-prone, conflict-ridden societies—Chechnya, Afghanistan, and certainly Somalia—is that, at times, the violence becomes indistinguishable from armed criminality and blood feuds. This "greed-based warfare," combined with the total absence of customs taxes and poor border patrol made the country into a major *entrepôt* economy for commercial goods entering the region.[12] The opportunity structure in Somalia, like that in Mexico, plays a significant role in driving Somalis to join or associate with various nonstate actors, be they pirates, terrorists, or criminal gangs. Aside from ideologically motivated Islamists, most Somalis do not discriminate and will "play to pay."

Throughout Somalia, the most pervasive form of criminality has been kidnapping for ransom. Indeed, for most of the past two decades, kidnapping has been "endemic" in Mogadishu, and those with wealth, family connections, or an employer thought to have deep pockets and an inclination to pay are prime targets.[13] Kidnapping is also used as a political tool or as a way to collect payments from debtors who have defaulted. Those in delinquency are kidnapped and held until their families can gather enough money to pay the ransom.[14]

Some of the worst crimes in the country have been perpetrated by the political elite and have included the embezzlement of foreign aid, the purposeful incitement of clan violence for political gain, rampant currency counterfeiting (which has increased inflation), and the ubiquitous export of charcoal, with its concomitant environmental destruction.[15] Other crimes committed by politicians include the "warlord-to-landlord phenomenon" of land grabs and growing involvement

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[12] Menkhaus, 2008, pp. 198–200. See also Ken Menkhaus, "Local Security Systems in Somali East Africa," in Louise Andersen, Bjørn Møller, and Finn Stepputat, eds., *Fragile States and Insecure People? Violence, Security, and Statehood in the Twenty-First Century*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, p. 77.

[13] Menkhaus, 2007, p. 77.

[14] Ken Menkhaus, *Somalia: State Collapse and the Threat of Terrorism*, New York: Routledge, 2004, p. 34.

[15] Menkhaus, 2004, p. 33.

in piracy (addressed in more detail later in this chapter).[16] "For many Somalis, the state is an instrument of accumulation and domination, enriching and empowering those who control it and exploiting and harassing the rest of the population," says Ken Menkhaus.[17]

The impact of violence and corruption has been multifold, enervating the national economy while enriching warlords. Negative consequences include additional costs for security, the absence of tax revenue to reinvest into the country's infrastructure, an inability to stabilize the currency, the deleterious effects of a complete dearth of environmental regulation, and the herculean challenge of attracting foreign direct investment.[18] This final point—attracting foreign direct investment—is further complicated by the capricious nature of stability throughout Somalia. Neighborhoods, cities, and towns can be variously classified as veritable no-go zones and areas of relative safety.[19] According to Menkhaus, "A town or neighborhood which is notoriously bandit-ridden can within a year boast stalls of street-corner money-changers and open roads; likewise, towns lauded for their peace and security fall quickly into lawlessness."[20]

Somalia's lawlessness has been countered to some degree by the further privatization of security. In 1999, the country's leading businesspeople revolted against Mogadishu-based warlords. They then hired the warlords' militiamen right out from underneath them, promising consistent pay and the prospect of a career. Large private security forces controlled by the business community now protect airstrips, seaports, and commercial arteries. A similar trend is sweeping across Mexico as those with the means to do so hire private security entities to ensure their business interests and provide physical protection.

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[16] Menkhaus, 2010a, p. 374.

[17] Menkhaus, 2008, p. 197.

[18] Robert L. Feldman, "Amidst the Chaos a Small Force for Stability: Somalia's Business Community," *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 23, No. 2, May 2012, p. 301.

[19] Menkhaus, 2007, p. 77.

[20] Menkhaus, 2004, p. 31.

State Failure and Weak Governance

The separate entities of Puntland and Somaliland operate as independent ministates adjacent to Somalia. Successful governance in Somalia has been achieved only through the rule of clan homelands, or what Menkhaus has dubbed "clanustans."[21] The sheer range of violent nonstate actors in Somalia (see Table 6.1) provides a clear snapshot of the challenges of enforcing governance in a collapsed state.[22]

Two other nonstate actors, Harakat al-Shabaab al-Mujahidiin (also known as al-Shabaab, or "the Youth") and Somali pirates, are discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Table 6.1
Range of Violent Nonstate Actors in Somalia

Violent Nonstate Actor	Description
Armed factions	Post-Barre regime insurgent groups included the Somali Salvation Democratic Front, the Somali National Movement, the United Somali Congress, and the Somali Patriotic Movement.
	These groups fought each other and soon fractured into separate warlord militias.
Subclan militias	Typically ad hoc militias comprising pastoralists, private security guards, armed youth, local police, sharia court security forces, and criminals.
	Clan militias are two-tiered, with one permanent outfit and another "reserve" element that can be mobilized on short notice.
Armed gangs	Known as mooryaan or jiri, these are small groups of armed youth who rely on various criminal sources of income, including illegal roadblocks to extort money or protection payments, while awaiting a chance for a more permanent opportunity to join a militia.
Private security forces	Regularly paid fighters tasked with protecting valuable assets, such as seaports and airstrips.
	Hired by businessmen to patrol facilities.
	Relatively more disciplined than other violent nonstate actors.

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[21] Menkhaus, 2008, p. 193.

[22] Menkhaus, 2010a, pp. 349–372.

Table 6.1—Continued

Violent Nonstate Actor	Description
Neighborhood watch groups	Combination of paid gunmen and armed residents; part protection racket, part unofficial police force.
	Invariably a source of security and insecurity.
Municipal/regional administrative security forces	Militias that are quasi-governmental security forces in the sense that they serve at the will of unrecognized entities like Puntland and Somaliland.
	There is inconsistency in that some are protectors while others are predators.
Sharia courts and sharia militias	Sharia groups consist of young gunmen attracted by regular pay and the lure of respectability.
	They are not mujahideen but committed Islamist fighters.
Other hardline Islamist armed groups	Jabhadda Islaamiga Soomaaliyeed, United Western Somali Liberation Front, Ras Kamboni Mujahidiin, and the Khalid bin Walid militia are a few examples.
Alliance for the Re-Liberation of Somalia	Umbrella movement of Islamists formerly belonging to the Islamic Courts Union (ICU), along with opposition parliamentarians and members of the diaspora.
	Developed special units with heavy weapons known as the Jugta Culus, or Heavy Strike Force.
	Split into Djibouti and Asmara factions in 2008.
Ahlu Sunna Waljama	Loosely networked clan-based militia that represents traditional Somali Sunni Islam.
	Formed in response to al-Shabaab and supported by Ethiopia.
Transitional Federal Government paramilitaries	Clan-based paramilitaries, including the Digle-Mirifle Liberation Army, known for predatory violence and attempt to usurp the most lucrative armed checkpoints.

Somali Pirates

Piracy in Somalia is nothing new, but attacks proliferated in the second half of the 2000s. Moreover, pirates were able to reap significant financial rewards from these attacks, which caused some concern about a growing terrorism-piracy nexus.[23] The following statistics are revealing:

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[23] Ken Menkhaus, "Dangerous Waters," *Survival*, Vol. 51, No. 1, February–March 2009, p. 22.

- Piracy attacks increased in Somalia from a "few dozen" in 2006 to 1,000–1,500 attacks by 2008.[24]
- Between $20 million and $40 million was been paid in ransom in 2008 alone.[25]
- An individual pirate can earn between $35,000 and $100,000 for his role in a successful hijacking. (The average Somali earns less than $2 per day.)[26]

Considering that most Somalis live on less than $2 per day, it is little surprise that so many are willing to risk their lives for a chance to earn the kind of money that comes with a successful hijacking. Martin Murphy describes the scene vividly:

> Four of five men in each boat navigating by the stars at night and sitting under the burning sun during the day chewing *khat*, eating millet and catching fish, which they ate raw, surrounded by cans of spare fuel, AK-47 automatic rifles, rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs) and their boarding paraphernalia of grappling hooks and short ladders.[27]

There are four main Somali pirate groups: the National Volunteer Coast Guard, the Marka group, the Somali Marines, and another group from Puntland comprising traditional Somali fishermen. These groups operate throughout the Gulf of Aden, the Red Sea, the Arabian Sea, the Indian Ocean, and as far away as the coast of Oman.[28] However, the coast of Puntland is thought to be the area with the most pirate activity.[29]

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[24] Christopher L. Daniels, *Somali Piracy and Terrorism in the Horn of Africa*, Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2012, p. 35.

[25] Menkhaus, 2009, p. 23.

[26] Daniels, 2012, p. 35.

[27] Martin N. Murphy, *Somalia: The New Barbary? Piracy and Islam in the Horn of Africa*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2011, p. 33.

[28] J. Peter Pham, "Putting Somali Piracy in Context," in Brian J. Hesse, ed., *Somalia: State Collapse, Terrorism and Piracy*, London: Routledge, 2011, p. 82.

[29] Daniels, 2012, p. 40.

Pirates are equipped with automatic rifles, hand grenades, RPGs, Global Positioning System technology, cell phones, and night-vision goggles.[30] Scholars have identified three types of attacks: groups of armed pirates in fast-moving small craft interdict ships using the main east-west shipping lane, clashes between groups of smugglers fighting to control of the north-south migrant route, and one vessel firing at another without boarding in a maritime version of a drive-by shooting.[31] Over the past several years, there have been four high-profile hijackings, including a Ukrainian vessel carrying weapons (MV *Faina*), a U.S. container ship (MV *Maersk Alabama*), a Saudi oil supertanker (MV *Sirius Star*), and a yacht with two American missionaries.[32]

Unlike in Southeast Asia, Somali pirates almost exclusively hijack ships to collect ransom payments, not to seize the ships and unload their cargo. Some of this is undoubtedly due to Somalia's poor infrastructure and lack of logistical capability.[33] Still, because piracy has grown into such a lucrative venture, more of Somalia's business community has become involved. Furthermore, at least some portion of the tens of millions of dollars in ransom money is flowing to the al-Qaeda affiliate, al-Shabaab.[34]

Harakat al-Shabaab al-Mujahidiin

Al-Shabaab should not be conflated with the ICU; they are not the same group. Rather, al-Shabaab is a radical fundamentalist faction that split from the ICU, which itself was the outgrowth of al Itihaad al Islamiya.[35] By 2005, Shabaab fighters numbered somewhere around

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[30] Daniels, 2012, pp. 35–36.

[31] Murphy, 2011, p. 29.

[32] Daniels, 2012, pp. 44–46.

[33] Pham, 2011, p. 85.

[34] Menkhaus, 2009, p. 22.

[35] Rob Wise, *Al Shabaab*, Al Qaeda and Associated Movements Future Project Case Study No. 2, Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, July 2011, p. 3. For a more robust discussion of al-Ittihad al-Islami, see Kenneth J. Menkhaus, "Somalia and Somaliland: Terrorism, Political Islam, and State Collapse," in Robert I. Rotberg, ed., *Battling Terrorism in the Horn of Africa*, Cambridge, Mass.: World Peace Foundation, 2005, pp. 35–36.

400 and grew further when Ethiopia invaded Somalia in late 2006.[36] In 2007 and 2008, employing a range of ambush-style attacks, improvised explosive devices, assassinations, and bombings, Shabaab militants fought the Ethiopian military to a standstill.[37] The Ethiopians withdrew in early 2009.

The fighting between Shabaab and Ethiopian forces, complemented by U.S.-backed militias, became known as a "dirty war," since both sides chose to eschew previously held norms regarding violence. Al-Shabaab introduced suicide bombing to Somalia, while the Ethiopians responded by using white phosphorous bombs to clear out entire neighborhoods.[38]

What Was Done to Improve the Situation?

The chaos of the immediate post-Barre period of the early 1990s was followed by failed U.S.- and UN-led interventions. For the next decade, Somalia was left to fend for itself. In October 2004, the Nairobi Peace Accords established the Transitional Federal Government, Somalia's best hope for stability and governance in years. However, this government never became operational, was bogged down by infighting and factionalism, and eventually fell apart.

In June 2006, the Supreme Council of Islamic Courts ascended to power and successfully restored law and order to Mogadishu. The courts "disarmed militiamen, removed roadblocks operated by gunmen, and policed the streets of Mogadishu, making the city safe for the first time since the late 1980s."[39] Other reasons for the drop in crime and violence included the reassertion of subnational governance systems throughout the country, the rise of private business militias, and the arming of previously weak social groups, such as in the agricultural communities of southern Somalia. These populations, in turn,

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[36] Ken Menkhaus and Christopher Boucek, "Terrorism Out of Somalia," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, September 23, 2010.

[37] Wise, 2011, p. 3.

[38] Menkhaus, 2010a, p. 373.

[39] Menkhaus, 2006–2007, p. 89.

became eminently less vulnerable.[40] Moreover, many former bandits made the transition to private security guards.

How Did It End Up?

Although the ICU brought much-needed stability to Somalia, the Islamist nature of the government threatened the West and neighboring Christian-dominated Ethiopia. In December 2006, an invasion force of Ethiopian soldiers backed by the Transitional Federal Government and Somali troops from Puntland battled ICU militants. In March 2007, African Union troops arrived in Somalia to replace the Ethiopians. The African Union Mission in Somalia force was led by Ugandan troops but included soldiers from Burundi and other counties. In 2011, Kenya placed its forces in Somalia under the banner of the African Union mission. In some of the fiercest fighting in Somalia since the early 1990s, at least 3,000 soldiers died fighting the ICU and affiliated insurgents, a body count that equaled or surpassed the total number of UN peacekeepers who have died in all UN operations combined. The U.S. Department of State designated al-Shabaab a foreign terrorist organization, and in 2010 the UN Security Council agreed to pay for the food, logistics, and medicine of the African Union troops, while the European Union guaranteed their salaries on a UN scale. In an effort to build nascent capability among the force, both the United States and the United Kingdom paid for military equipment.

Similarities and Differences Between Somalia and Mexico

Violence

In what Menkhaus has described as "an orgy of uncontrolled violence" following ethnic cleansing in Mogadishu and outright state collapse in January 1991, Somali warlords and their forces were responsible for massacring orphans, raping women from rival clans, the mass slaughter of clan elders, killing and mutilating pregnant women, indiscriminate mortar and RPG bombings of neighborhoods, and using women as

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[40] Menkhaus, 2006–2007, p. 89.

human shields.[41] Young men roamed the country wearing shirts declaring "I Am the Boss" in English. This phrase came to reflect the stark reality that, in essence, every Somali was his or her own boss, which meant security for nobody and violence for all.[42] Even absent competition over resources, as in Mexico, competition for primacy among the militias, gangs, and warlords was enough to make Somalia one of the most violent countries in the world.

Indiscriminate Mayhem or "Anomic Violence"

Another key difference between Mexico and Somalia is the range of issues sparking the conflict. Indeed, Mexico faces its own share of challenges. But in Somalia, the fledgling government must deal with insurgency, terrorism, clan warfare, warlordism, and piracy, all while struggling to rebuild an economy and infrastructure devastated by state collapse and more than three decades of continuous warfare. Mexico's security challenges include the prospect of combating numerous VDTOs. But Somalia's security challenges extend beyond a vast array of violent nonstate actors, each affecting the state in a slightly different way.

Traditional Threat/Insurgency

Although radical Islam does not have a rich history in Somalia, over the past decade or so the country has fallen into the "orbit of Wahhabist preaching," which, in turn, has boosted political Islam in the country.[43] The most obvious example is the ascendancy of the fundamentalist terrorist group al-Shabaab, which has actively recruited ethnic Somalis from the diaspora in Europe and the United States to return to Somalia and fight with the insurgents. In July 2010, al-Shabaab detonated bombs among revelers watching a World Cup soccer match in Kampala, Uganda, killing 74 people and injuring scores more.[44] Reli-

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[41] Menkhaus, 2010a, pp. 372–373.

[42] Menkhaus, 2010a, p. 373.

[43] Menkhaus, 2005, pp. 23–24.

[44] Sudarsan Raghavan, "Islamic Militant Group Al-Shabaab Claims Uganda Bombing Attack," *Washington Post*, July 12, 2010.

gious extremists have also regularly targeted foreign aid workers and journalists in Mogadishu.

Ethnically Motivated Violence

Ethnic conflict in Somalia is a complex issue. Accordingly, much of the violence can be traced back to tribes, clans, and subclans. On the other hand, some of the worst crimes in the country have been perpetrated by the political elite, pirates, terrorists, or criminal gangs. As in Mexico, some of the violence in Somalia is "greed-based," while other forms of conflict are the result of blood feuds, which take the form of revenge killings.

Lack of Economic Opportunities

According to Menkhaus, "the 'privatization of everything' in Somalia has also created a largely unregulated economy in which criminal economic activity (such as smuggling and drug production) flourishes."[45] Interestingly, Somalia has remained a rather unwelcome place for international organized crime.[46] This is likely due to the country's poor infrastructure and the clannish nature of its society. The result is that—in a twist on Daniel Patrick Moynihan's prescient observation about politics—in Somalia, "all crime is local." Smugglers and traffickers traverse East Africa with guns, drugs, and people. On trips from Somalia to Saudi Arabia via Yemen, migrant traffickers smuggle refugees in overloaded boats and reportedly toss passengers overboard at will.[47]

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[45] Menkhaus, 2008, p. 200.

[46] This same phenomenon has also made Somalia fairly inhospitable to transnational terrorist organizations, as Menkhaus recounted in his description of al-Qaeda's exploits throughout East Africa in the 1990s. See Ken Menkhaus, "State Failure and Ungoverned Space," in Mats Berdal and Achim Wennmann, eds., *Ending Wars, Consolidating Peace: Economic Perspectives*, London: Routledge, 2010b, p. 187. As a corollary, however, the rise of radical Islam throughout the Horn of Africa in the latter half of the 2000s has again raised concerns that al-Qaeda or its ilk will establish a robust presence in the region. See Angel Rabasa, *Radical Islam in East Africa*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MG-782-AF, 2009, and Menkhaus, 2005.

[47] Murphy, 2011, p. 29.

Weapon Availability

The Bakaara Market in Mogadishu has been one of the world's busiest bazaars for the exchange in arms, weapons, and ammunition for more than two decades. In a nation where conflict has raged unabated, "the abundance of readily available modern weaponry exacerbated the violence."[48]

Competition over a Resource

Conspicuously absent from Somalia's range of problems is a highly valuable commodity. While many Somalis do chew *khat*, an amphetamine-like stimulant popular throughout East Africa and Yemen, the trade in this plant is not lucrative enough to make it a highly sought-after commodity for criminal gangs. Unlike in Mexico, Somalis are not fighting each other over control of an illicit resource. However, much of the economy is informal, like Mexico's "cash and carry culture," which makes it difficult if not impossible to establish a legitimate tax base.

Ungoverned Spaces

Even a cursory reading of Somalia's postcolonial history highlights its status among the most difficult-to-govern areas in the world. Its territory consists of wide swaths of "pastoral statelessness" punctuated by a "loose constellation of commercial city-states and villages."[49] The pastoral clan organization of society makes the country inherently unstable. Shifting alliances and structural competition between clan families mean that different subclans in a clan family will fight and compete among each other for resources and band together against another clan when threatened.[50] As in Afghanistan, the result is a recipe for endless conflict.

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[48] Shultz and Dew, 2006, p. 74.

[49] Menkhaus, 2008, p. 197.

[50] Shultz and Dew, 2006, p. 63.

State/Institutional Weakness

Although Mexico is sometimes discussed using the language of state failure and the Mexican state has certain significant weaknesses, Mexico and Somalia are dissimilar in this regard. Somalia's state failure reached the level of complete state collapse, and Mexico has not approached that level, nor is it likely to.

Patronage/Corruption

Somalia is consistently lampooned as one of the most corrupt nations in the world, but comparisons of corruption in Somalia with corruption in Mexico would be misleading. Describing the situation in Somalia in the early 1990s, Richard Shultz and Andrea Dew recount that "Somalia had long disintegrated to a level of violence and chaos that was hard to imagine. There was no government, no law, no economy; and no means of maintaining even a modicum of security."[51] Corruption and patronage are significant challenges in Mexico, but their levels are nowhere near those faced by Somalia's fledgling Transitional Federal Government.

Lessons for Mexico

Mexico is a reasonable analog for Somalia in some respects due to the level of violence, the nature of some of the violence, the lack of economic opportunities, the high availability of weapons, ungoverned space, and state weakness that includes dire levels of corruption. Yet, unlike Somalia, Mexico commands many of the resources needed to make legitimate progress in solving many of these challenges. Somalia lacks these resources, and the peripatetic character of the international community's attention and assistance over the years has translated to only a modicum of fleeting progress.

Somalia can provide lessons for Mexico insofar as it shows just how bad things can get when anomie leads to anarchy. Juarez is not Mogadishu, but there are tangible parallels. The fact that Mexico and

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[51] Shultz and Dew, 2006, p. 57.

Somalia are in any way plausibly comparable should be a major concern to the Mexican government and military. Over two decades of violence and conflict, successive Somali governments have been unable to bring stability to the country. A major reason why Somalia continues to face security and governance challenges is a lack of continuity in its security forces and national government.

The conflict in Somali offers several important lessons that can help inform the situation in Mexico. First, stability and order can occasionally come from unlikely sources. In Somalia, the ICU at least temporarily provided a sense of security in Mogadishu before Ethiopian forces invaded the country and forced it from power. Second, another unconventional option for providing security is private security forces. Businesses in Somalia hired private security guards to protect their assets and, by most accounts, these guards were better trained and equipped than the majority of Somalia's rag-tag militias. If the Mexican government is resolute in its disdain for external "boots on the ground," perhaps organic sources of manpower can assist in stabilizing certain parts of the country or at least in supporting critical security-related activities, such as border patrol and drug interdiction. Finally, a consolation prize for Mexico might be that no matter how bad things get, Somalia proves that by continuing to build the capacity of its security forces, the situation can improve and security can be restored. By no means are the security forces in Somalia a paragon of professionalism, but the underlying lesson for Mexico is clear: Building robust and effective security forces takes time, and how much time depends on the absorptive capacity of the forces being trained.

Angola (1992–2010)

Case Selection Categories: Warlordism, Resource Insurgency, Ungoverned Spaces

The conflict in Angola began with the war of independence against the Portuguese (1961–1974) and then morphed into a battle for control of the state—and its vast resources—among three competing armed groups: the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), the National Liberation Front of Angola, and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA).[1] The first phase of the conflict, from 1975 to 1992, was a classic Cold War–era proxy conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union.[2] Following the end of the Cold War, the MPLA and UNITA were forced to fund their respective organizations through what Michael Ross has called "booty futures," or the sale of the rights to precious commodities.[3] This case study focuses exclusively on the period from 1992 to 2010, detailing the struggle for power and control over the means to fight for that power.

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[1] Fernando Andresen Guimarãse, *The Origins of the Angolan Civil War: Foreign Intervention and Domestic Political Conflict*, Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan, 1998.

[2] For an in-depth analysis of the insurgency in Angola between 1975 and 1992, see Christopher Paul, Colin P. Clarke, Beth Grill, and Molly Dunigan, *Paths to Victory: Lessons from Modern Insurgencies*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-291/1-OSD, 2013.

[3] Michael L. Ross, "What Do We Know About Natural Resources and Civil War," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 41, No. 3, May 2004.

Conflict and Violence in Angola

When the Cold War ended and UNITA lost the backing of its erstwhile supporters, the United States and the apartheid government of South Africa, the group decided to continue fighting. As a means to continue the fight, it was forced to resort to criminal violence.[4] UNITA used the money it earned from the diamond trade to develop a conventional military capability, thus dragging Angola further into the vortex of war and misery, with the following results:

- More than 1.3 million people were displaced, over 10 percent of the country's population.[5]
- In the roughly two-year period between September 1992 and November 1994, more than 300,000 people were killed, more than the total number of casualties during the Cold War period (1975–1991) that preceded this phase of fighting.[6]
- Due to the collapse of food security and health services, approximately 330,000 Angolans fled the country.[7]

The Cult of Jonas Savimbi

UNITA's leader, Jonas Savimbi, was trained abroad in China in the tenets of Maoist guerrilla warfare at the Nanjing Military Academy. When he returned to Angola in early 1966, he formed UNITA as a group that would represent the Ovimbundu people, the largest ethnolinguistic group in Angola. The Ovimbundu represented between 35 and 40 percent of the country's population and inhabited the central plateau provinces of Huambo, Bie, and Benguela, the most densely populated areas of the country.

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[4] Assis Malaquias, "UNITA's Insurgency Life Cycle in Angola," in Klejda Mulaj, ed., *Violent Nonstate Actors in World Politics*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2010, p. 294.

[5] Malaquias, 2010, p. 309.

[6] Charles Cater, "The Political Economy of Conflict and UN Intervention: Rethinking the Critical Cases of Africa," in Karen Ballentine and Jake Sherman, eds., *The Political Economy of Armed Conflict: Beyond Greed and Grievance*, Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 2003, p. 23.

[7] Philippe Le Billon, "Angola's Political Economy of War: The Role of Oil and Diamonds, 1975–2000," *African Affairs*, Vol. 100, No. 398, 2001, p. 59.

Savimbi was many things to many people—insurgent commander, pseudo-intellectual, political hopeful—but above all else, he was a megalomaniac and a mass murderer. He ruled through fear and paranoia and micromanaged UNITA's personnel in an extremely authoritarian manner. By ruthlessly eliminating his rivals, both real and imagined, Savimbi enforced a cult of personality that rivaled the likes of other infamous insurgent and terrorist leaders, including Velupillai Prabhakaran of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, Abdullah Öcalan of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), and Abimael Guzmán of Sendero Luminoso.

Under Savimbi's leadership, the group's "propensity for self-mutilation" meant that continuous self-purges were necessary to ensure that no other figure in UNITA's ruling circle ever grew too powerful. These purges resulted in the elimination of Jorge Sangumba (foreign secretary), Pedro "Tito" Chingunji (foreign secretary and deputy secretary-general), Wilson dos Santos (international cooperation), Eunice Sapassa (president of UNITA's women's organization), António Vakulukuta (UNITA's top Ovambu leader), Valdemar Chindondo (chief of staff), Jose Antonio Cehndovava (chief of staff), Mateus Katalaio ("interior minister"), and many others.[8] UNITA members were stripped of a basic sense of individual identity to ensure unquestioned compliance with Savimbi's directives. Joining the group was (sometimes) optional and other times forced, but leaving the group voluntarily was not an option. To get a true appreciation of just how bloodthirsty UNITA's leader was, when he singled out individuals for elimination, he rarely stopped there. Often, he ordered the execution of their families as well, including young children.[9]

To teach others in the group never to question his authority, punishments were doled out in public and included torture that bordered on medieval. For example, UNITA members were killed by being beat to death, burned at the stake, crushed by heavy military vehicles, shot execution-style by a firing squad, or having their skulls smashed against

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[8] Malaquias, 2010, pp. 303–304.

[9] Malaquias, 2010, p. 305.

trees, with children the most common victims of this last method.[10] These are merely some of the many human rights abuses carried out by Savimbi and his henchmen.

Explaining the Outbreak of Violence

While much of the violence in Angola was perpetrated by UNITA's leader against his own people, the overall structure of the conflict pitted the ruling MPLA against UNITA rebels in a contest for control of the state. The violence was initially instigated in domestic conflicts resulting from differences in class, race, ethnicity, and vision for the postcolonial government administration.[11] Socioeconomic challenges and inequality also contributed to violence.[12] What sustained the violence was different. Underlying this control was a struggle for post-independence spoils, primarily oil and diamonds. Finally, some of the intra-UNITA violence must be attributed to the erosion of legitimacy within that organization and the use of repression as a remedy, albeit a flawed one.[13]

Illicit Economy, Crime, and Violence

Angola's illicit economy was built around the criminal networks that emerged following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Many of these networks were attached to both the formal and informal economy and, as such, were both willing and able to facilitate the diamonds-cash-weapons trade that helped prolong the conflict and led to both crime and violence. Put simply, the insurgents acquired hard currency in exchange for diamonds, and this currency was exchanged for weaponry, which UNITA then used to build its forces in defiance of UN sanctions. This furthered the group's war aims and perpetuated the

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[10] Malaquias, 2010, p. 305.

[11] Assis Malaquias, "Diamonds Are a Guerrilla's Best Friend: The Impact of Illicit Wealth on Insurgency Strategy," *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 22, No. 3, June 2001a, p. 319.

[12] Jutta Bakonyi and Kirsti Stuvoy, "Violence and Social Order Beyond the State: Somalia and Angola," *Review of African Political Economy*, Vol. 32, Nos. 104–105, 2005, p. 369.

[13] Bakonyi and Stuvoy, 2005, p. 372.

cycle of death and destruction that came to characterize Angola in the 1990s.

The insurgents established accounts at banks in Switzerland, Portugal, South Africa, Morocco, the Ivory Coast, and the Channel Islands, while regional states, including Zaire, Namibia, and the Republic of the Congo, served as suppliers, transit points, and service providers.[14] Eastern Bloc countries, especially Ukraine and Bulgaria, supplied the insurgents with weapons and munitions, including 50 T-55 and T-62 tanks; significant numbers of 155-mm G5, B2, D2, and D30 guns; medium- and long-range D130 guns; BMP-1 and BMP-2 combat vehicles; ZU-23 anti-aircraft weapons; and MB-21 multiple-rocket launchers.[15] UNITA insurgents also engaged in a diamonds-for-weapons exchange with South African mercenaries, as well as with a network of state and nonstate sympathizers in Central and West Africa.[16]

MPLA Violence

It is important to remember that, although the MPLA was technically considered "the government" in Angola, immediately prior to being anointed, the MPLA was one of the fiercest insurgent groups operating against the Portuguese during the war for independence. Like UNITA, MPLA fighters were quite capable of excessive violence. As part of its COIN strategy, the MPLA relied on the forced resettlement of civilians into socialist collective villages, keeping with its Marxist-Leninist roots. Kai M. Thaler argues that it was exactly the government's retreat from its once-fierce ideological commitment that led it to become more, not less, violent.[17]

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[14] Jakkie Potgieter, "'Taking Aid from the Devil Himself': UNITA's Support Structures," in Jakkie Cilliers and Christian Dietrich, eds., *Angola's War Economy: The Role of Oil and Diamonds*, Pretoria, South Africa: Institute for Security Studies, 2000, p. 264.

[15] Malaquias, 2010, p. 315.

[16] Ian S. Spears, *Civil War in African States: The Search for Security*, Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 2010, p. 219.

[17] Kai M. Thaler, "Ideology and Violence in Civil Wars: Theory and Evidence from Mozambique and Angola," *Civil Wars*, Vol. 14, No. 4, 2012.

Kleptocrats replaced ideologues. Corruption and cronyism were the byproducts of robust patronage.[18] And the more the government became interested in profiting from oil and diamonds, the more violence against civilians increased, from 26 percent of all attacks against civilians by actors in the war to 32 percent over a six-year period.[19] Unsurprisingly, the MPLA was particularly violent against those suspected of providing support to UNITA. In 1992, more than 1,000 people were killed around Luanda by government forces and government-armed civilian militias. There was later evidence of mass graves.[20]

Fighting to Control the Mines

No longer able to count on the external support of Cold War benefactors, the insurgents marched from Southeast and Central Angola to the diamond-producing regions of Lunda Norte, Lunda Sul, and Malange.[21] The strategy of forcing newly displaced civilians out of the diamond-producing regions and into government-held territory served a dual purpose. First, by forcing civilians from these areas and resettling them elsewhere, UNITA could gain unfettered access to the mines without having to pay any of the political or administrative costs of governance.[22] Second, this strategy had the ancillary benefit of overwhelming the government and further stretching its already thin resources.

With profits gained from selling "conflict diamonds" to the *garimpeiros*, or diamond diggers, UNITA insurgents were able to purchase food and weapons. They used money culled from their control of the diamond trade to continue the earnest buildup of their forces into a

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[18] Tony Hodges, *Angola: From Afro-Stalinism to Petro-Diamond Capitalism*, Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2001.

[19] Thaler, 2012, p. 559.

[20] Karl Maier, *Angola: Promises and Lies*, 2nd ed., London: Serif, 2007, pp. 117–127.

[21] Malaquias, 2010, p. 307.

[22] Malaquias, 2010, p. 308.

conventional military.[23] As Philippe Le Billon notes, the illicit diamond trade "constituted for UNITA a conspicuous economic opportunity to purchase, deploy, and resupply expensive weapon systems through an extensive network of private corporations and foreign state authorities rewarded by lucrative deals and personalized diamond gifts."[24] Between 1993 and 1997, UNITA controlled Angola's most lucrative diamond fields, which accounted for 10 percent of global diamond production by value. To put this figure in perspective, it is estimated that UNITA earned $300 million in 1993, $400 million in 1994, $600 million in 1995, $700 million in 1996, and $600 million in 1997.[25]

As in Mexico, the fight to control a lucrative market increased competition, which inevitably led to violence. With no shortage of willing customers abroad, UNITA understood that control of Angola's diamond-producing regions meant an influx of cash that could be used to purchase weapons. Similarly, the wealth accumulated by the most powerful Mexican VDTOs has been used to finance a growing arsenal and establish resilient networks able to deliver drugs from the source to the end user in an efficient and consistent manner.

State Failure and Weak Governance

Because Angola was plunged directly into war immediately following independence, postcolonial state formation never had an opportunity to succeed. The reality was more akin to armed state-building on the fly. Conflict compounded the state's already limited ability to administer or provision social services. Management of the economy was misguided, though the government's control of the oil industry brought it enough economic largesse that built-in inefficiencies would be viewed as mere bureaucratic nuisances. This ineptitude extended to

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[23] Jakkie Cilliers, "Resource Wars—A New Type of Insurgency," in Jakkie Cilliers and Christian Dietrich, eds., *Angola's War Economy: The Role of Oil and Diamonds*, Pretoria, South Africa: Institute for Security Studies, 2000, p. 7.

[24] Le Billon, 2001, p. 67.

[25] Christian Dietrich, "UNITA's Diamond Mining and Export Capacity," in Jakkie Cilliers and Christian Dietrich, eds., *Angola's War Economy: The Role of Oil and Diamonds*, Pretoria, South Africa: Institute for Security Studies, 2000.

areas the government periodically occupied outside the larger cities and towns. Numerous indicators suggest a significant degree of administrative collapse.[26] For the governing MPLA, everything revolved around its access to oil. Just as in Mexico, the single largest contributor to the Angolan government's budget is drawn from the state-controlled petroleum industry. According to Reno, "Oil exports from 1993 to 1998 provided about 87% of the MPLA regime's formally recorded revenues (exclusive of loans and aid), which means that US customers provided the MPLA regime with about 60% of its total revenues."[27] In a different way, current U.S. demand for illicit substances is keeping Mexican drug gangs employed.

Corruption and Patronage Politics

The MPLA evolved comfortably from insurgency to ruling government. Soon after taking power, the group began building patronage networks that directed the political and economic norms of doing business within the country. Access determined wealth; wealth and power, in turn, led to more access. Rulers relied on oil money that created "political networks oiled by patronage," with the sole intent to "enrich themselves, their families, and their associates."[28] Across the country, the network was sustained by "the financial 'Bermuda Triangle'" of the national oil company, the central bank, and the presidential palace.[29]

When reform is proposed, entrenched elites have a clear reason not to cooperate with, or to blatantly obstruct, the acceleration of change. Or, as Leonid Fituni describes it, what is in the best interest of the country at large may threaten, either directly or indirectly, the vital interests of certain groups.[30] It should be noted that the insurgents, too,

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[26] Cilliers, 2000, p. 10.

[27] William Reno, "The Real (War) Economy of Angola," in *Angola's War Economy: The Role of Oil and Diamonds*, in Jakkie Cilliers and Christian Dietrich, eds., Pretoria, South Africa: Institute for Security Studies, 2000a, p. 221.

[28] Reno, 2000a, p. 221.

[29] Reno, 2000a, p. 221.

[30] Leonid L. Fituni, "The Collapse of the Socialist State: Angola and the Soviet Union," in I. William Zartman, ed., *Collapsed States: The Disintegration and Restoration of Legitimate*

operated within the confines of a patron-client relationship, keeping their authority system institutionalized through a patrimonial functional logic.[31] Ultimately, according to Assis Malaquias, "the networks of patron-client relationships were used by the ruling elite for political control and financial aggrandizement."[32] Furthermore, because of the failure to reinvest oil monies back into Angola's infrastructure, the opportunity structure for young Angolans has remained unchanged, despite increased oil wealth. Not unlike the situation in Mexico, corruption begot corruption in Angola as nascent patronage networks ingratiated themselves into a system of self-sustaining graft and bribery.

What Was Done to Improve the Situation?

The final phase of Angola's insurgency lasted from late 1998 until February 2002, when UNITA's leader, Jonas Savimbi, was killed on the battlefield. Historically, some insurgent leaders have been so central to their organizations that the insurgency soon winds down upon their demise or capture. Abimael Guzmán of Peru's Sendero Luminoso and Abdullah Öcalan of Turkey's PKK are two examples commonly referenced in the literature. So it was with the death of UNITA's Savimbi, which paved the way for the Angolan military's victory over an attenuated insurgency—a victory that Gomes Porto and Imogen Parsons consider "central to this conflict's ripeness for resolution."[33]

The parties to the conflict signed the Luena Memorandum of Understanding in April 2002. The agreement reaffirmed the principles of the Lusaka Protocol and, most importantly, the process was organically Angolan—agreed to by the military leaders of Angola's armed forces and UNITA with no outside intervention. It lent a previously absent sense of legitimacy to the conflict-resolution process for the parties involved and for Angolans in general. But the outcome left little

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Authority, Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1995, p. 153.

[31] Bakonyi and Stuvoy, 2005, p. 370.

[32] Malaquias, 2001a, p. 319.

[33] João Gomes Porto and Imogen Parsons, *Sustaining the Peace in Angola: An Overview of Current Demobilisation, Disarmament, and Reintegration*, Bonn, Germany: Bonn International Center for Conversion, 2003, p. 31.

doubt as to which side emerged victorious. As Ian Spears concluded, "As impressive as the Lusaka Protocol was, it was still power-sharing with a balance of power that favored the government."[34]

How Did It End Up?

The Angolan government made great strides toward reducing violence at the end of the conflict. Targeting the insurgency's leader proved an effective strategy. After Savimbi's death, UNITA crumbled quickly. Once the violence finally came to a halt, the Angolan government was able to concentrate on the country's oil and diamond resources and begin rebuilding the country. By 2007, the Angolan economy benefited from the production of 1.5 million barrels of oil per day, second only to Nigeria on the African continent.[35] The oil sector has enjoyed massive investment from multinational corporations, including ExxonMobil, BP, and Chevron.[36] Angola's oil production is on par with that of energy powerhouses like Kuwait. In 2006, Angola surpassed Saudi Arabia as the top oil exporter to China.[37]

But while Angola's rich oil resources have lifted the country up and helped it rebuild its infrastructure, the concentration of this newfound wealth in the hands of a few has hardened growing inequality between those with access to the government and those without. Even in the latter half of the 2000s, the population lived on the equivalent of less than $2 a day, the majority of Angolans lacked access to basic health care, and one-quarter of children perished before their fifth birthday.[38] It remains a poor, underdeveloped petrostate that has seen a sharp reduction in violence with the end of the war but still has a long way to go to provide a better quality of life to those who lived through and suffered during the more tumultuous times.

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[34] Spears, 2010, p. 209.

[35] Sharon LaFraniere, "As Angola Rebuilds, Most Find Their Poverty Still Persists," *New York Times*, October 14, 2007.

[36] Jad Mouwad, "Nowadays, Angola Is Oil's Topic A," *New York Times*, March 20, 2007.

[37] Mouwad, 2007.

[38] Mouwad, 2007.

Similarities and Differences Between Angola and Mexico

Violence

By the time Angola's conflict entered the late 1990s, the insurgents had acquired a vast arsenal of sophisticated weaponry. Much of the violence in Angola was between UNITA insurgents and the MPLA-led Angolan government, though civilians were consistently caught in the crossfire. Mobile conventional units of insurgents attacked COIN force troops using armored fighting vehicles, long-range artillery, and guided anti-tank missiles.[39] The scope and nature of the violence was completely different from that perpetrated by the VDTOs in Mexico.

Indiscriminate Mayhem or "Anomic Violence"

While there were acts of indiscriminate mayhem in Angola, much of the violence was directly related to the UNITA-led insurgency. Members joined the organization voluntarily, but they were prevented from leaving through force and intimidation. Under the paranoid leadership of Savimbi, the group's top leaders were purged and the torture and killing of civilians was rampant. After Savimbi's death, acts of anomic violence were rare.

Traditional Threat/Insurgency

The insurgency in Angola grew out of a postcolonial struggle that pitted several different substate groups against Portuguese COIN forces. The anti-Portuguese insurgency that preceded the UNITA-led insurgency lasted from 1961 to 1974 and overturned Angola's existing social hierarchy while also destroying much of the country's infrastructure. In a sense, Angola failed to experience uncontested governance until 2002, when Savimbi was killed and the MPLA consolidated control over what were previously insurgent-held areas. The result has been that, even with significant oil wealth, the country still suffers from massive underdevelopment and a serious inequality issue, particularly economic inequality.

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[39] Potgieter, 2000, p. 263.

Ethnically Motivated Violence

Violence in Angola was sharply divided between the Mbundo and *mestico* people on the one hand and Angola's most populous ethnic group, the Ovimbundu, on the other. The latter group comprised approximately 35–40 percent of the population and was most prominent in the central plateau provinces of Huambo, Bie, and Benguela. Ethnic violence was merely one characteristic of the conflict in Angola, which also featured competition over resources (primarily diamonds) and a continuation of Angola's war of independence, which was fought against the Portuguese from 1961 to 1974. In short, there are no similarities between the ethnically motivated violence in Angola and the violence in Mexico.

Lack of Economic Opportunities

The anti-Portuguese insurgency lasted from 1961 until 1974, followed by a struggle for control of the state that lasted another 27 years. All told, Angola suffered from more than four decades of continuous war and violence. In turn, this led to the collapse of most state institutions and caused the national economy to plummet severely as illegal commerce dominated the marketplace and the economic success enjoyed during Portuguese rule quickly vanished. Even in the years since the fighting ended, the Angolan economy has been artificially buoyed by oil exports and diamond reserves. Widespread corruption and the long-standing practice of patronage have further contributed to a weak economy dominated by small cliques of well-connected Angolans. Like Mexico, there are essentially "two Angolas." One is the oil-rich post-conflict government in Luanda, and the other is the poor majority of the country, for which violence has ebbed but poverty has not.

Weapon Availability

Because Angola was a Cold War battlefield, neither side in the conflict was ever in dire need of weapons. Instead, using money culled from their control of the diamond trade, the insurgents transformed their force from a guerrilla organization into a conventional military through the addition of heavy weaponry, vehicles, and other equipment.

Competition over a Resource

Diamonds are a high value-to-volume product that helped fuel the conflict in Angola by providing both sides with the resources necessary to further their respective war aims. According to Reno, "Diamonds had made UNITA so rich that nothing that donors could offer would matter, while renewed predation offered massive rewards."[40] With the obstinate Savimbi at the helm, and flush with cash reserves from diamond trafficking, UNITA pressed on with its plan to transform from a rank-and-file guerrilla group to a conventional, full-scale military. Without the wealth garnered from diamonds, this transformation would not have been possible. (This transformation is also one of the critical enabling factors that allowed government COIN forces to prevail.)

Ungoverned Spaces

In the areas that fell under its control, UNITA established a parallel quasi-state that challenged the legitimacy of the government in Luanda. At one point, the Angolan government had grown so weak that the insurgents managed to establish a sophisticated shadow state complete with schools, hospitals, and farms. Indeed, large swaths of the country were alternatively governed by UNITA cadres and included a viable administrative apparatus with social welfare services.[41] The provision of alternative forms of governance was one of the key factors in extending the conflict, as the Angolan government came under siege for its inability to challenge UNITA's shadow state during long stretches of the insurgency, and the country's vast expanse made it difficult for the government to extend control over the entire territory.[42]

State/Institutional Weakness

In Angola, illicit resources financed *both* sides of the conflict, including the government. For those who retained power, war became just as

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[40] Reno, 2000a, p. 221.

[41] Bakonyi and Stuvoy, 2005, p. 369.

[42] Herbst, 2000, p. 151.

profitable as peace.[43] As a result, the government had perverse incentives to continue the conflict. Since most of Angola's oil reserves are located off its coast, the insurgents never posed a true threat to the government stranglehold on oil. Diamonds, however, remained a hotly contested resource, with government security forces battling insurgents over access to key diamond-producing regions and the profits that accompany control of these regions. In Mexico, the government is not involved in the drug trade but, on the contrary, is an active opponent of the VDTOs. To be sure, the continued effort to counter the supply of drugs and the groups that run the smuggling and trafficking networks is a primary driver of violence in Mexico.

Patronage/Corruption

Even today, Angola is consistently ranked among the most corrupt countries in the world by Transparency International. At the insurgency's apex, corruption was merely a fact of life for most Angolans. Corruption was justified and, subsequently, blatant. In short, corruption became a way of life for not just the elite but for anyone attempting to engage in commerce, on a large or small scale, licit or illicit. The corruption that grew to become so ordinary during the nearly three-decade-long conflict has also been difficult to extirpate in the conflict's wake. Although there is no longer an insurgency to combat, the Angolan government has resisted most attempts toward greater transparency, citing a litany of excuses, including national security. Like Mexico, a weakened judiciary further complicates attempts to investigate and prosecute corrupt officials.

Lessons for Mexico

Many challenges faced by the Angolan government provide important lessons for Mexico. Although anomic violence is perhaps worse

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[43] Assis Malaquias, "Making War and Lots of Money: The Political Economy of Protracted Conflict in Angola," *Review of African Political Economy*, Vol. 28, No. 90, December 2001b, p. 534.

in Mexico than it was in Angola, the challenge of widespread violence during Angola's insurgency was palpable. When combined with a lack of economic opportunities, readily available weapons, fierce competition over a valuable resource, ungoverned spaces, and endemic corruption, Angola seems much closer to Mexico than one might initially believe.

Angola has many similarities with and proffers several important lessons for Mexico. First, there is always some degree of instability likely to result from a change in government. After the Portuguese withdrew from Angola in the mid-1970s, several insurgent groups immediately vied for control of the capital, Luanda. When longstanding parties change, the political patronage networks that formed around these parties are disrupted, often leading to violence. Old ways of conducting business change as well, and a reappropriation of the levers of control in society are unlikely to be smooth. As has occurred in Mexico, the result in Angola has been a combination of old corruption and new corruption accompanied by government institutions concerned with maintaining arrangements rather than engineering real reform. One minor change in the system can produce effects several orders of magnitude beyond the significance of the original change. When negotiations are not a viable solution, a decapitation strategy could become the only viable approach. While the motivation to control the diamond trade was ultimately to convert cash into weapons to further UNITA's quest to capture the state, in Mexico, the motivation is purely economic. In fact, Mexican VDTOs eschew any political platform, which makes them quite different from UNITA.

Burma (1988–2012)

Case Selection Criteria: Warlordism, Resource Insurgency, Ungoverned Spaces, High Level of Organized Crime

Burma has been subject to a civil war and a multiform ethnic insurgency since it gained independence from Britain in 1948. In that time, no fewer than 25 insurgent groups have been involved in the conflict, "representing a diverse range of ethnic, political, ideological, economic, and geographically based causes."[1] By 1999, the conflict in Burma had resulted in roughly 10,000 casualties per year,[2] as well as the displacement of more than 1 million Burmese civilians.[3]

Although the conflict in Burma is ongoing, there have been significant changes since the student revolt of 1988, the ensuing military coup, and the installation of a military junta called the State Law and Order Restoration Council. Over the years, council and its 1997 successor, the State Peace and Development Council,[4] have engaged in a

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[1] Jake Sherman, "Burma: Lessons from the Cease-Fires," in Karen Ballentine and Jake Sherman, eds., *Political Economy of Armed Conflict: Beyond Greed and Grievance*, Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 2003, p. 226. See also Richard Snyder, "Does Lootable Wealth Breed Disorder? A Political Economy of Extraction Framework," *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 8, October 2006, p. 959.

[2] Catherine Brown, "Burma: The Political Economy of Violence," *Disasters*, Vol. 23, No. 3, 1999, p. 236.

[3] C. Brown, 1999, p. 234.

[4] The State Peace and Development Council was dissolved in 2011, and the country is presently governed as a republic with a president and legislature.

strategy of signing cease-fire agreements with Burma's many armed opposition groups. (In March 2011, the military government was replaced with a civilian government engaged in a process of institutional reform and transitioning to a more open and democratic political system.)[5] Ostensibly, these cease-fires were aimed at controlling the conflict and preventing further violence. But it is also true that they allowed rival rebel leaders, the military, and the government to more freely pursue their economic self-interests in Burma's illicit markets.[6] Freed from the costs of open conflict, these leaders were able to engage in mutually beneficial natural resource extraction and, perhaps most lucratively, Burma's enormous drug trade.

Put simply, by the late 1980s, the Burmese state was being outfinanced by the insurgency. As a result, the government chose to pursue policies that would both significantly reduce the violence that had consumed Burma since the late 1940s and provide itself and the notoriously corrupt Burmese military with a cut of the illicit markets—and profits—that the insurgents had been cultivating and exploiting since the end of World War II. After 1990 and a number of cease-fire agreements, Burma's opium production increased significantly, and opium became the country's leading export.[7] This shift has not been inconsequential: The revenues flowing from the narcotics trade have helped finance business empires and have transformed erstwhile ethnic and political movements into "armed business ventures."[8] Furthermore, as Bertil Lintner argues, by the year 2000, Burma had become "Asia's first and only state which survives on the export of narcotics."[9] By co-opting and cooperating with its former rivals, the Burmese government

[5]   Carl Grundy-Warr and Elaine Wong, "Geopolitics of Drugs and Cross-Border Relations: Burma-Thailand," *IBRU Boundary and Security Bulletin*, Vol. 9, No. 1, Spring 2001, p. 112.

[6]   See Sherman, 2003, p. 245.

[7]   Snyder, 2006, p. 959.

[8]   Sherman, 2003, p. 236. See also Donald M. Seekins, "Burma in 1998: Little to Celebrate," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 39, No. 1, January–February 1999, p. 17, and C. Brown, 1999, p. 246.

[9]   Bertil Lintner, *The Golden Triangle Opium Trade: An Overview*, Hong Kong: Asia Pacific Media Services, March 2000, p. 21.

has been able to significantly reduce the size and scope of the conflict, even though its means of doing so are anything but conventional. This case does not closely parallel Mexico. In fact, many elements of this case—its length, the government's complicity in drug trafficking, the role of drugs in state finance, and so on—have few parallels anywhere. Yet, Burma, much like Afghanistan, offers a glimpse into a possible "worst-case" future for the parts of Mexico where VDTOs hold sway and state forces are as much a part of the problem as they are a part of the solution.

Conflict and Violence in Burma

While rebel groups can certainly be held accountable for the violence in Burma, the Burmese military and the tactics it has employed also warrant mention. The Burmese army, or Tatmadaw, has fought conventionally and unconventionally and, on many occasions, has orchestrated attacks on populations living in and near insurgent strongholds.[10] Burma's military has been responsible for "mass atrocities" since the early 1960s, and its COIN initiatives have featured "execution, torture, rape, forced labor, and displacement as weapons of war."[11]

The violence in Burma has been durable, and its warring parties have been many. The net result of the conflict between these groups and the Burmese government has been mass deprivation, economic disruption, and hundreds of thousands of deaths. Until very recently, populations could not count on personal security, particularly in Burma's hinterlands. Although horrific, this is not difficult to comprehend: When rebel groups and militaries collide over a 60-year period, high death tolls and humanitarian disasters are to be expected. But the violence in Burma and the resulting displacement and disruption is not solely a product of warring parties and their continued attempts to

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[10] See Grundy-Warr and Wong, 2001, p. 112.

[11] Stanford STAND, *Burma Storytelling*, event program, Stanford University, February 2010.

resolve their grievances. It is also important to take into account the role that Burma's illicit market has played in continuing the violence.

Opium, one of Burma's chief exports, has been grown and sold by Burmese guerrillas since shortly after the end of World War II. The majority of Burma's opium is produced in the country's northeast, along the border with China, Laos, and Thailand.[12] Burmese warlords have historically been interested in both the profits from growing and selling opium and in how those profits could be used to support their fight against the Burmese state and to cement their control in the areas where they have operated. Opium requires little capital investment to grow and harvest.[13] And the climate in northeast Burma, where the bulk of the country's armed groups are located, is well suited to growing opium poppies.

Opium—and, more recently, other manufactured narcotics, such as amphetamines—has played a central role in Burma's conflict. Its profitability has allowed the rebels to continue to finance their operations and to avoid bargaining with the Burmese government, whose own forces have been historically and comparatively underfunded. Furthermore, as the opium industry has grown over time, many of Burma's poor farmers and displaced civilians have become hostages to its trade.[14] Farmers and displaced civilians alike have been compelled to grow and harvest opium by rebel leaders and by the Burmese military.[15] The costs of not engaging in opium production have been quite high. A decision to not participate in the opium trade has variously and capriciously resulted in arrest, crop destruction or seizure, land confiscation, conscription, and even death. Recent estimates suggest that

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[12] C. Brown, 1999, p. 234.

[13] Richard A. Crooker, "Forces of Change in the Thailand Opium Zone," *Geographical Review*, Vol. 78, No. 3, July 1988, p. 248.

[14] Farmers produced poppies as a "tax" paid to insurgent groups. See C. Brown, 1999, p. 240.

[15] Forced labor is a common practice in Burma. See, for exemple, Ron Corben, "ILO: Forced Labor Still Widespread in Burma," Voice of America, July 7, 2010, and Jacob Baynham, "Burma's Largest Rebel Army Battles Increase in Opium Production," *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 15, 2008.

more than 300,000 Burmese households are involved in poppy cultivation.[16] Perversely, the money generated by their efforts has funded a significant source of their troubles: Opium profits are used to purchase supplies to continue the conflict of which they and their families have been the ultimate victims.

For decades, the motives of the parties engaged in Burma's conflict have varied, but they have included ideology, economics, ethnicity, nationalism, and, sometimes, all four. It is increasingly difficult to separate the conflict in Burma from the illicit economy that has underpinned it since its beginning, however. And despite the recent and relative calm, profit, particularly from the drug trade, has proved to be yet another motive for continuing violence in Burma and surrounding states.

Funding, the Economy, and the Transformation of the Conflict

Significant economic troubles prompted a dramatic change in the nature and scope of Burma's conflict in the late 1980s and early 1990s. At that time, Burma's armed groups were losing the support of their external state sponsors, and the Burmese state was suffering from economic woes brought on by years of conflict and habitual government mismanagement. The only Burmese market that seemed to be thriving was the opium market, which had been historically controlled and administered by guerrilla leaders. As Ronald Renard noted at the time, opium was one of the country's "few economic successes."[17] And, as Catherine Brown contends, years of conflict had fueled the opium market, and the industry was, during this period, Burma's "sole financial success."[18]

In light of these changes in circumstance, Burma's armed groups became much more dependent on the black market for their survival.[19] These groups, which had been involved in the illicit export of timber

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[16] Charlie Campbell, "Obstacles Ahead in Burma's Opium War," *Time*, March 19, 2013.

[17] Ronald D. Renard, *The Burmese Connection: Illegal Drugs and the Making of the Golden Triangle*, Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1996, p. 89.

[18] C. Brown, 1999, p. 234.

[19] Sherman, 2003, p. 232.

and minerals and the production of opium for quite some time,[20] significantly expanded their drug trade. In later years, this market included amphetamines,[21] a drug that Andrew Merz argues could be more profitable than even heroin.[22] Burma's ruling junta responded to its cash-flow troubles by decentralizing many of its military commands, a process that made them relatively autonomous.[23] By the mid-1990s, the Burmese government began authorizing its armed forces to engage in "business" ventures and directed them to become essentially "self-financing."[24] It was during this period that the Burmese government, particularly though its military, also began to self-finance through joint natural resource extraction and narcotics production with formal rebels.[25] These ventures, often supported by forced labor, not only allowed local military units to sustain themselves, but they also provided a much-needed source of revenue for the military government. As Roy Godson and William Olson argue, the government engaged in and countenanced "the production and trafficking of opium to help finance its operations."[26] In this way, Burma is far different from Mexico. In the latter, soldiers and government officials are often corrupt, but their operations are not directly funded by profits from the drug trade.

As these relationships matured, all sides in the conflict began to benefit from the illicit trade and taxation of drugs, timber, and mineral products.[27] Burma's guerrilla groups were able to continue to amass wealth, and the government was able to finance its growing military.

[20] See Mya Maung, "On the Road to Mandalay: A Case Study of the Sionization of Upper Burma," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 34, No. 5, May 1994, pp. 452–453.

[21] See Grundy-Warr and Wong, 2001, p. 109.

[22] Andrew A. Merz, *Coercion, Cash-Crops and Culture: From Insurgency to Proto-State in Asia's Opium Belt*, thesis, Monterey, Calif.: Naval Postgraduate School, June 2008, p. 70.

[23] Neil A. Englehart, "Is Regime Change Enough for Burma? The Problem of State Capacity," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 45, No. 4, July–August 2005, p. 638.

[24] Sherman, 2003, p. 241.

[25] Snyder, 2006, p. 960.

[26] Godson and Olson, 1995, p. 19.

[27] Steven Lanjouw, Graham Mortimer, and Vicky Bamforth, "Internal Displacement in Burma," *Disasters*, Vol. 24, No. 3, 2000, p. 236.

While the conflict in Burma did not end as a result of these business ventures and partnerships, the Burmese government's progressive signing of cease-fire agreements and its brokering of other deals with guerrilla leaders did help limit the number of warring parties and thus narrowed the scope of the conflict. The Burmese government essentially began a program of co-optation, whereby it traded autonomy to its former foes in exchange for a piece of Burma's illicit market. As Svante Cornell argues, "Burma is the clearest case of ideological movements losing much of their original purpose."[28] The Burmese government forced a perverse marriage of convenience: Burmese military units became increasingly involved in drug transit, and former guerrilla leaders became involved in building roads, infrastructure, and other property development projects in opium-producing areas.[29]

What Was Done to Improve the Situation?

The biggest improvements undoubtedly resulted from the Burmese government's pursuit of cease-fire agreements after the 1988 military coup. Initially, these agreements helped the government stave off further conflict after the 1988 revolt.[30] They were later used to entice acquiescing groups to (1) stop fighting against the government and, in some cases, (2) turn on their former compatriots.[31] Additionally, more "discrete" deals between military and government leaders and opposition commanders fostered economic cooperation among former combatants. These partnerships were "lucrative business ventures," and the government granted the groups rights to mine minerals and harvest forest products.[32] Perhaps most consequentially, these agreements eased the cooperation of military forces and warlords in the drug trade, a relationship that is unlikely to be palatable or repeated in Mexico.

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[28] Cornell, 2005b, p. 757

[29] See Sherman, 2003, pp. 241–243, and C. Brown, 1999, p. 248.

[30] Lintner, 2000, p. 19.

[31] Sherman, 2003, p. 233. See also Grundy-Warr and Wong, 2001, p. 110.

[32] Sherman, 2003, pp. 226, 234. Bertil Lintner argues that some of the relationships between the Burmese military and drug traffickers are "bonds of friendship" (Lintner, 2000, p. 19).

Concurrent and subsequent policies related to the cease-fire agreements also improved financial conditions in Burma. In 1989, Burma instituted a "whitening tax," which was adopted in an effort to coax the repatriation of funds deposited in banks outside the country.[33] Additionally, in 1993, the Burmese government instituted an exchange policy to ensure that repatriated funds would be subject to a highly favorable exchange rate.[34] While cease-fires and other associated agreements and legislation have allowed armed groups a large degree of freedom in the production, transport, and sale of narcotics,[35] they have also increasingly brought illicit profits to Burmese bank accounts.[36] Regardless how they were acquired, these profits have helped the Burmese government function and have been invested in infrastructure and other government projects.

Of course, these benefits have come at a cost. While the Burmese government's policy choices have narrowed the scope and size of the conflict, they have also led to or contributed to an unsustainable boom in the extraction of Burma's natural resources, an explosion in the drug trade, a consequent rise in the rates of drug abuse in the region, and an expanded use of forced labor. It is difficult to say whether Burma is better off because of these policy choices.

How Did It End Up?

The conflict in Burma is ongoing, but the country has made a slow but significant transition away from totalitarian rule and has significantly reduced the scope of the conflict through several cease-fire agreements. Drug-related violence has also decreased, and many parties are now cooperating instead of competing in the drug market.[37] There are no

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[33] Lintner, 2000, p. 19.

[34] Lintner, 2000, p. 19.

[35] Sherman, 2003, p. 237. Catherine Brown notes that some of these agreements stated that armed groups could maintain their autonomy as long as they agreed to fight against those who had not signed cease-fire agreements with the state (C. Brown, 1999, p. 247).

[36] See Snyder, 2006, pp. 960–961, and Lintner, 2000, p. 23.

[37] It has risen in nearby Laos, however. See Matthew Pennington, "Drug Violence Up in Laos, Seizures Down in Myanmar," Associated Press, March 3, 2011.

signs that either the drug trade or the exploitation of natural resources is slowing, yet Burma's perceptible shift toward a more representative government is a somewhat hopeful omen for a country that has been devastated by six decades of conflict and abysmal governance.

Similarities and Differences Between Burma and Mexico

Burma offers one extreme example of how a conflict and associated violence can be reduced: through the co-optation of former foes. Although this characterization of what has happened since 1988 is a bit of an oversimplification, it is not off the mark. It remains to be seen how Burma's conflict will eventually unfold and whether Burma's cease-fires will ultimately bring about improved living conditions for the country's citizens. It is important to note that Burma still has three large and festering problems with which it will have to contend: problems that it and Mexico share both in kind and degree. However, the differences between Burma and Mexico are many. Mexico's economy is by no means as dysfunctional as the Burmese economy, and Mexico's government and military are not actively involved in the narcotics industry. Furthermore, Mexico's drug traffickers are close to being ethnically homogeneous and have little apparent ideology of note. But these variances do not imply uniqueness; lessons for Mexico can be drawn from both the similarities and differences with this case.

Violence

Conflict between Burma's warring parties and the Burmese government has lasted decades and featured many combatants over time. The results have been disastrous for the country and for its economy, while Burma's human capital has eroded as a result of refugee crises, citizens fleeing the country's violence, and hundreds of thousands of deaths. But to truly understand the essence of violence in Burma, it is crucial to understand the role of the illicit economy in perpetuating it. In this sense, Burma should be a harbinger for Mexico. When control over illicit resources is fierce, violence can endure for decades on end.

Indiscriminate Mayhem or "Anomic Violence"

Anomic violence in Burma has not been an issue as it has in Mexico. For this reason, similarities and differences between Burma and Mexico in this respect are not particularly relevant for our purposes.

Traditional Threat/Insurgency

In Burma, the combatants' motives have shifted among economics, ethnicity, and nationalism. More recently, it has become difficult to separate the conflict in Burma from the illicit economy, a situation quite similar to that in Mexico. In both countries, profit from the drug trade remains a strong motivation for the groups in control and those battling to gain control to continue relying on violence to achieve their goals.

Ethnically Motivated Violence

The conflict Burma originated in and revolved around ethnic disputes. It has also had a significant ideological component. However, ideology and, in some cases, ethnicity have been trumped by profit as a motivating force for Burma's armed groups, not to mention the Burmese government and military. This kind of flexibility is not necessarily uncommon in conflicts that last for long periods and in which the participants have to find alternative means of funding their activities. What is important to note, particularly for our purposes, is that profit seems to be the *primus inter pares* for a number of the groups that have been involved in Burma's conflict. This has important implications for all involved in the violence in Mexico, not the least of which is how inconsequential other motivations might be to those involved in Mexico's drug trade.

Lack of Economic Opportunities

Burma has been in poor economic shape for quite some time, and, as discussed earlier, the heroin industry has been one of its few economic success stories. This is no less the case today: The state relies either directly or indirectly on the funds generated by the narcotics industry to maintain some semblance of functionality. Paradoxically, for all of the ancillary problems that it has caused, the illicit economy might

be one of the few pursuits outside the exploitive extraction of natural resource that is promoting some level of economic stability and growth in Burma. There even seems to be some indication that the Burmese government is using a portion of the funds generated by this industry to modestly improve conditions in the country. Although leveraging the illicit economy for conflict resolution and economic development is not what one would consider a "normal" public policy solution, it is nonetheless a pragmatic and perhaps even rational response to what has been an irrationally long and particularly violent conflict.

Weapon Availability

High levels of weapon availability in Burma translated to well-armed criminals and insurgents. This situation, in turn, increased demands on the Burmese military and law-enforcement forces in terms of their equipment and tactical capabilities. Similarly, in Mexico, better-armed adversaries have challenged both the police and military forces and led to an increase in law-enforcement and military casualties. However, what worked in Burma will not work in Mexico. Co-opting insurgents does nothing to disarm them (unless this co-optation involves a proper disarmament program), so there are few lessons for Mexico to learn from what happened in Burma.

Competition over a Resource

The most lucrative segment of Burma's illicit marketplace is its narcotics industry. This industry has historically been dominated by opium and heroin, both of which are high value-to-volume products that can be manufactured, transported, and sold with relative ease. But as Afghanistan has supplanted Burma as the world's largest opium producer—and as the Burmese government has "reduced" opium farming by destroying the production capabilities of many of its foes—numerous other Burmese drug manufacturers, aided by elements of the Burmese military and Chinese entrepreneurs, have shifted to producing amphetamines. The UN estimates that 700 million tablets, or about 20 tons of methamphetamine, were transported to

Thailand in 2003 alone.[38] This estimate does not account for the amount of methamphetamine shipped to other countries or consumed within Burma itself.[39] The value of the amphetamine and heroin exported by Burma is enormous. And even if Burma were able to completely divest itself of opium production, it would still have to contend with the vast amphetamine production complex in its restive border areas.

Ungoverned Spaces

As Jake Sherman argues, "The lack of centralized state control over Burma's remote and porous border areas facilitated the extension of regional informal and black-market economies into Thailand, China, and India."[40] Even if Burma were able to regain control of its borders, which is unlikely—especially in the near term while it is still engaged in some form of conflict—it would still have to rely on neighboring states to manage the activities of cross-border ethnic communities and the black-market ties they have developed over the past 60 years. Needless to say, this is also somewhat unlikely. Thailand has tried to limit the illicit trade crossing its border and has had only sporadic success. The supply of illicit goods is high and so is demand. Short of a regional partnership and significant resource investment, Burma's border will likely remain perforated and highly trafficked. While the Mexican and U.S. governments have made a number of agreements and have devoted a significant amount of resources to improving the situation along the U.S.-Mexican border, the amount of money tied up in the cross-border drug trade largely trivializes what is spent on these efforts.

State/Institutional Weakness

Burma's government had such difficulty funding its military operations that it granted several of its military units virtual autonomy and recommended that they become self-financing. It likely made this decision with full knowledge of how these units would finance themselves. In this way, the Burmese government at least tacitly allowed its military

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[38] Federico Varese, "Is Burma the Next Mexico?" Reuters, December 6, 2011.

[39] Domestic drug use in Burma, as in Mexico, is rising steadily.

[40] Sherman, 2003, p. 232.

to become involved in the drug trade in exchange for remaining loyal to the state and continuing to engage rebel forces that were not party to any cease-fire agreements. Burmese military units, or at least some of their personnel, are reportedly actively involved in the production and transportation of narcotics, making the government party to significant levels of illicit activity. This is a dangerous gamble, to say the least. It is risky for the government to partner or even cooperate with former enemies while engaging in illicit activities, especially given the motivational power of profit. One need to look no further than Mexico's Los Zetas to see how military forces might be enticed to become full-time members of an organization that counts the state as one of its enemies.

Patronage/Corruption

The Burmese government was unable to "win" its fight against Burma's many armed groups in the conventional sense. These groups were too well dispersed, numerous, and armed. Furthermore, they have been supported by a renewable and almost limitless supply of funds generated by and through the narcotics trade. In fact, even as the situation in Burma "improves" and the conflict narrows, these traffickers retain their resources, power, and influence. The only real difference is that many of them do not have to devote significant efforts and resources to arming and funding an insurgency. It is reasonable to expect the same in Mexico: Even if the violence decreases, the capacity for violence will remain as long as the VDTOs retain their resources. Perhaps one of the few consolations of the evolution and partial resolution of the conflict in Burma is that many of the country's former warlords have converted their holdings into business and infrastructure investment projects. Although they are highly corrupt, they have devoted their interests to building their financial empires rather than waging war. While this does not mean that the violence they have perpetrated or sponsored in the past will not remain a part of their managerial expertise, it is now less likely that these skills and capacities will be options of first resort in the future.

Lessons for Mexico

Perhaps the most important lesson for Mexico is how intoxicating and corrupting profit can be as a motivator. What was at one point an ideological insurgency led by warlords evolved into a partnership between the warlords and the government. As has been seen in Mexico, proximity to the profits of the drug trade can be a Siren's call. This challenge is not easily overcome, particularly when a state's armed forces are grossly and comparatively underpaid. Secondarily, it is important to note how profit maximization and need intersected, both for the rebels and for the government and military, to transform the conflict in Burma. Finally, to reduce the scope of the conflict—and for a host of other, more self-serving reasons—the Burmese government and military made choices that could hardly be considered acceptable, at least by the norms of most states and international institutions. This final lesson is significant: Despite all the negative consequences of the cooptation policies and cease-fire agreements that the Burmese government has pursued, the country was in bad enough shape that this was perhaps the best choice out of a range of other very poor options. If the conflict in Mexico expands, Mexico may be forced to make similar, unpalatable choices.

Tajikistan (1992–2008)

Case Selection Criteria: Warlordism, Resource Insurgency, High Level of Organized Crime

Tajikistan is a collective product of its Soviet past, geography, and historical position as a trafficking route from Asia to Eastern Europe. Tajikistan is also, and perhaps most importantly, an artifact of its 1992–1997 civil war, a conflict that helped set the conditions for its seemingly perpetual unrest. Tajikistan's civil war killed tens of thousands of people, with many these deaths a result of violence perpetrated to secure food and basic supplies.[1] The conflict also left hundreds of thousands of civilians internally displaced and destroyed tens of thousands of homes.[2] Remnants and vestiges of Tajikistan's postindependence conflict still exist today. As Johan Engvall argues, "Independence in Tajikistan de facto meant the destruction rather than creation of the most basic attributes of statehood."[3]

Since Tajikistan became independent, it has progressively succumbed to corruption, the illicit narcotics industry, terrorist and

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[1] John Heathershaw, *Post-Conflict Tajikistan: The Politics of Peacebuilding and the Emergence of Legitimate Order*, New York: Routledge, 2009, p. 23.

[2] International Crisis Group, *Tajikistan: An Uncertain Peace*, Asia Report No. 30, December 24, 2001, p. 2. See also Jim Nichol, *Tajikistan: Recent Developments and U.S. Interests*, Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, July 29, 2009, p. 4; Anthony Richter, "Springtime in Tajikistan," *World Policy Journal*, Vol. 11, No. 2, Summer 1994, p. 81.

[3] Johan Engvall, "The State Under Siege: The Drug Trade and Organised Crime in Tajikistan," *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 58, No. 6, September 2006, p. 833.

insurgent organizations operating on its soil, and significant economic transformation and decay. As the state weakened and the economy fell into further disarray, insurgents, warlords, and government officials—sometimes inseparable and often functionally interchangeable—took greater control of Tajikistan's illicit economy, which has become nearly as large as and certainly more important than its licit economy. The missing dynamism of Tajikistan's economy has given power to elites and nonstate actors while legitimate laborers have been forced to find work elsewhere if they have not already been absorbed into informal and oftentimes illicit work roles. Although Tajikistan began to make economic progress and recorded double-digit growth levels in the mid-2000s, by 2005, its economy had reached only 62 percent of its 1991 size.[4] Those in charge of Tajikistan's government have neither the power nor, it seems, the will to make Tajikistan economically or physically secure and functional. Much like their opposition and certainly like the VDTOs and their official supporters in Mexico, they are instead interested in personal enrichment. This helps explain the patterns of violence that still exist in Tajikistan, more than a decade after it settled its civil war.

Conflict and Violence in Tajikistan

The continuing conflict in Tajikistan is probably best understood as an "instrumentalist struggle amongst elites: a ruling faction confronted by opportunistic individuals seeking personal advancement in a weak institutional environment," in the words of John Heathershaw.[5] The origins of this dysfunction can be traced to Tajikistan's civil war. Although the conflict largely ended in 1993 after pro-communist forces captured Dushanbe,[6] there was no cease-fire agreement until 1997. But

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[4]   Heathershaw, 2009, p. 24.

[5]   Heathershaw, 2009, p. 24.

[6]   For further discussion, see Nasrin Dadmehr, "Tajikistan: Regionalism and Weakness," in Robert I. Rotberg, ed., *State Failure and State Weakness in a Time of Terror*, Cambridge, Mass., and Washington, D.C.: World Peace Foundation and Brookings Institution Press,

the cease-fire only marked the end of the beginning of the conflict. While levels of personal security rose for most Tajiks after the civil war, dire economic conditions, the formation of armed rival parties, and an explosion of the opium trade set the conditions for a criminal conflict that continues still today.

Much like in neighboring Afghanistan, the drug trade funded opposing forces in Tajikistan's civil war.[7] And similar to Afghanistan, Tajikistan was awash in small arms made available in the wake of the breakup of the Soviet Union and the departure of Soviet forces.[8] The availability of small arms made violence of all forms (including murder, kidnapping, rape, assassinations, and extortion) and for all reasons (money, vengeance, politics) just as possible as during the civil war.[9] As Jessica West argues, "The declaration of peace in Tajikistan ended neither the armed conflict nor the opium war economy."[10] Criminal gangs and warlords have used profits from the drug trade to carve out areas of influence and have continued to compete with each other and the state, sometimes violently, for control of licit and illicit economic resources.[11]

Thus, although the Tajik civil war officially ended in 1997, many factors have combined to destabilize Tajikistan both politically and economically—factors that set the conditions for and perpetuated the violence among competing parties. Tajikistan's prewar economy and its collapse after independence, the rise of the illicit economy during the civil war, and the Tajik government's inability and unwillingness to control its borders and portions of its territory are three of the most significant factors contributing to the continuing violence in Tajikistan.

2003, p. 250. The United Tajik Opposition was believed to be funding itself through the drug trade. See Maral Madi, *Drug Trafficking in Weak States: The Case of Central Asia*, thesis, Uppsala, Sweden: Uppsala University, 2003, p. 50.

[7]   Jessica West, "The Political Economy of Organized Crime and State Failure: The Nexus of Greed, Need, and Grievance," *Innovations*, Vol. 6, 2006, pp. 5–6.

[8]   John Heathershaw, "The Paradox of Peacebuilding: Peril, Promise, and Small Arms in Tajikistan," *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 24, No. 1, March 2005, p. 28.

[9]   See discussion in Dadmehr, 2003, pp. 255–256.

[10]   West, 2006, p. 5.

[11]   West, 2006, pp. 5–6.

Tajikistan's Pre–Civil War Economy

Tajikistan has not been blessed by either significant natural resource deposits or geography.[12] It is largely mountainous, landlocked, and rural. And although less than 10 percent of its land is arable, most of its formal (and even informal) economy depends on the agriculture sector.[13] Tajikistan is largely populated by itinerant farm workers and laborers: There is little evident entrepreneurial capacity outside of either the government or the drug trade. Thus, were the Tajik government wholly invested in resuscitating or recreating the official Tajik economy, it would have very little to work with.

Tajikistan's geographical shortcomings were compounded during the years of Soviet rule, when Tajikistan was required to produce cotton and smelt aluminum to fulfill its part of Soviet central planning. While Tajiks largely filled laborer and field positions, ethnic Russians still managed the cotton and aluminum manufacturing and production facilities.[14] Needless to say, Tajikistan, to a greater degree than Mexico, has not historically been an economically diverse or dynamic country, nor has it exhibited any comparative advantage. Because Tajikistan produced so little outside of what it was directed to produce during Soviet times, up to 40 percent of Tajikistan's budget had to be funded through subsidies paid by the Soviet central government in Moscow.[15] By 1989, Tajikistan had very low productive capacities and levels of economic development, even by Soviet standards.[16] In the 1990s, standards of living decreased precipitously,[17] unemployment and economic

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[12] Interestingly, aluminum smelting is one of Tajikistan's largest industries, yet bauxite is scarce or nonexistent in Tajikistan.

[13] Dadmehr, 2003, pp. 257–258.

[14] Dadmehr, 2003, pp. 248–249.

[15] See International Crisis Group, 2001, p. 1.

[16] See Sayidfozil Zokirov and Khojamahamad Umarov, "Economic Development in the Ferghana Valley Since 1991," in S. Frederick Starr, ed., *Ferghana Valley: The Heart of Central Asia*, Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharp, 2011, p. 234.

[17] See Zokirov and Umarov, 2011, p. 234.

distress was endemic,[18] many people became migrant workers,[19] and the informal and illicit economy boomed.[20]

The Rise of the Illicit Economy

Drug trafficking through Tajikistan is a protected industry.[21] This protection is afforded by traffickers both within and outside the Tajik government. As Nicole Jackson argues, a significant percentage of Tajikistan's state budget comes from narcotics trafficking.[22] As in Afghanistan, it is difficult if not impossible to separate the licit and illicit economies in Tajikistan. A lack of opportunity, combined with the chance to make a substantial income lured, or even compelled, many Tajiks into the drug trade. This situation parallels that witnessed in Mexico.

Tajikistan's drug trade has blossomed since the dissolution of the Soviet Union. For instance, in 1991, 10.9 kilograms of narcotic substances were confiscated while being transited through Tajikistan.[23] In 2000, 7,128.9 kg were seized.[24] According to an International Crisis Group report, this likely represents only a small fraction of the total narcotics trafficking that was occurring in Tajikistan in the early 2000s. It is quite possible that up to 70,000 kg of opium were being trafficked through Tajikistan each year, worth nearly $700 million, or

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[18] See Letizia Paoli, Irina Rabkov, Victoria A. Greenfield, and Peter Reuter, "Tajikistan: The Rise of a Narco-State," *Journal of Drug Issues*, Vol. 37, No. 4, October 2007, p. 953, and Dadmehr, 2003, pp. 248–258.

[19] See Engvall, 2006, p. 844, and Paoli et al., 2007, p. 958.

[20] See Zokirov and Umarov, 2011, p. 244. Industrial wages in 2004 were about $52 per month. See Engvall, 2006, p. 844; Paoli et al., 2007, p. 958; International Crisis Group, *Tajikistan: A Roadmap for Development*, Asia Report No. 51, April 24, 2003; and International Crisis Group, *Tajikistan: On the Road to Failure*, Asia Report No. 162, February 12, 2009.

[21] West, 2006, p. 11.

[22] Nicole J. Jackson, "International Organizations, Security Dichotomies and the Trafficking of Persons and Narcotics in Post-Soviet Central Asia: A Critique of the Securitization Framework," *Security Dialogue*, Vol. 37, No. 3, September 2006, p. 309.

[23] International Crisis Group, 2001, p. 19.

[24] International Crisis Group, 2001, p. 19.

roughly five times Tajikistan's state budget.[25] The amount of opium being trafficked from Afghanistan through Tajikistan has undoubtedly increased since that period, given that Afghanistan's opium industry has grown by orders of magnitude and the pervasiveness of the narcotics trade in Tajikistan.[26] The drug trade has become so important to the functioning of Tajikistan's economy that it is considered "central" to the country's political system.[27]

Following the breakup of the Soviet Union, Tajikistan's licit economy collapsed, the country descended into civil war, and few jobs were available in industries other than migrant agriculture, cotton, and aluminum production. According to Letizia Paoli, as a result, "significant groups within the Tajik population have become dependent on the revenues of the illicit opium trade."[28] In the early 1990s, illicit drugs were used as bartering instruments for clothing, footwear, and other sundry items.[29] In fact, by the late 1990s, "many tens of thousands of individuals were benefiting from the drug trade."[30] It is unclear how large Tajikistan's illicit economy has become, but, by 2003, international agencies estimated that up to 30 percent of Tajiks might be involved in the "black economy" in one way or another.[31] They also suggest that the narcotics trade accounts for up to 50 percent of all economic activity.[32] It comes as no surprise that the revenues generated through drug trafficking have not been invested in the licit economy and that these proceeds are not taxed, at least not officially.[33] Even if profits from

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[25] International Crisis Group, 2001, p. 19.

[26] See the discussion of the opium trade in Merz, 2008, p. 21. See also "Drug Trade Engulfs Tajikistan, Spills into Russia," *Jamestown Foundation Monitor*, Vol. 7, No. 21, 2001.

[27] Paoli et al., 2007, p. 952.

[28] Paoli et al., 2007, p. 951.

[29] Erica Marat, "Impact of Drug Trade and Organized Crime on State Functioning in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan," *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 2006, p. 104.

[30] Paoli et al., 2007, p. 953.

[31] International Crisis Group, 2003, p. 20.

[32] International Crisis Group, 2001, p. 19.

[33] See International Crisis Group, 2003, pp. 21–22.

the narcotics trade could be used to stabilize and reinvigorate the Tajik state and economy, there is little evidence that this has happened or that it will.

A Possible Loss of Control

Tajikistan is the smallest of the five former Soviet Central Asian states, but it is nonetheless geographically complex and mountainous. Accordingly, there are many geographic spaces in Tajikistan that are not controlled in any significant way by the government or its agents.[34] These areas are subject to alternative forms of governance that perpetuate border insecurity, violence, and a slew of other illicit activities, the narcotics trade chief among them.[35]

Ostensibly, the Tajik government, like the Mexican government, does not have the resources to control its territory: Its official budget is limited, given the country's poor economic performance and the amount of economic activity that occurs "off the books." But this is only part of the story. Tajikistan's insecurity also seems to be the deliberate product of corrupt and complicit government officials who—as in Mexico—either do not or cannot project force throughout the country. If the Tajik government could have projected ample amounts of force to secure its territory, and if it had done so, it would have (1) disrupted the narcotics trade, which benefits many government officials, and (2) caused additional friction between the government and the powerful opposition groups that control in the areas where drug trafficking occurs.

Since the 1997 cease-fire, criminals of various stripes have been active participants in Tajikistan's government and governance. Many warlords and former warlords have occupied offices in the Tajik government,[36] even while they retain their positions as the heads of pri-

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[34] International Crisis Group argues that, by 2011, "Tajikistan has almost no capacity to tackle a dedicated insurgent force" (International Crisis Group, *Tajikistan: The Changing Insurgent Threats*, Asia Report No. 205, May 24, 2011, p. i).

[35] The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, or IMU, is known to take active steps to destabilize border areas where trafficking takes place. See West, 2006, p. 7.

[36] Dadmehr, 2003, p. 254.

vate armies.[37] They first accrued their power during the Tajik civil war because of their access to weapons and ability to broker drug deals.[38] They later exercised power by pressuring prosecutors and judges to enforce the law with caprice and in a way that punished their political opponents.[39] It should come as no surprise that the secretary of Tajikistan's Security Council acknowledged in 2001 that many "drug merchants and couriers are also representatives of Tajik state agencies."[40] Nor should it be shocking that efforts in the early 2000s to replace Russian border forces with Tajik border forces "might be coming from Tajik officials seeking to assert their control over the drugs trade."[41] Perhaps most tellingly, in March 2004, a former warlord with extensive experience in the narcotics trade was appointed to head the Tajik Drug Control Agency.[42] Tajik corruption has been so severe in the early 2000s that many Tajiks felt more secure under the control and authority of local warlords than they did as subjects of corrupt national representatives.[43]

Tajikistan's inability to secure its border and territory is as much a product of the government's unwillingness to take on this task as it is a symptom of a lack of capacity. Tajikistan is truly a case of leaving the foxes in charge of guarding the henhouse. It is seemingly impossible to identify the borders between governance and criminality in Tajikistan: The only perceptible difference between the two is whether or not one resides and operates principally in Dushanbe or in Tajikistan's border regions. It is quite conceivable that Tajikistan's territorial control problems are less the result of a lack of control than they

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[37] See Paoli et al., 2007, p. 954.

[38] Marat, 2006, p. 103.

[39] Nichol, 2009, p. 6.

[40] Engvall, 2006, p. 846. See also International Crisis Group, 2001, p. 14; Dadmehr, 2003, p. 255; Paoli et al., 2007, p. 957; and Nichol, 2009, p. 2.

[41] International Crisis Group, *Tajikistan's Politics: Confrontation or Consolidation?* Asia Briefing No. 33, May 19, 2004, p. 17.

[42] Alessandra Ceccarelli, "Clans, Politics and Organized Crime in Central Asia," *Trends in Organized Crime*, Vol. 10, No. 3, 2007, p. 29.

[43] Dadmehr, 2003, p. 254.

are a result of too much control by parties that have little interest in securing anything other than their own piece of the narcotics trade. As the drug trade continues to grow in Mexico, it is at least *possible* that the Mexican government will face a similar future: Bad actors might become too ingrained in the functioning of the state and its economy to be dislodged.

What Improvements Were Made?

Violence and conflict are still facts of life in Tajikistan, particularly in and near its border regions and other contested areas. And the economy, despite its growth, is still fragile. As John Heathershaw points out, household and social surveys "indicate that whatever rehabilitation of livelihoods has been experienced can largely be attributed to the informal economy."[44] While there have been modest improvements in Tajikistan with respect to violence, they should be understood in their proper context: Tajikistan had and continues to have quite a lot of room for improvement on all dimensions of its security problems.

How Did It End Up?

Despite modest improvements, Tajikistan is still insecure, has a weak economy, and suffers from the direct and ancillary effects of a booming narcotics trade occurring within and across its borders. Tajikistan still also suffers from significant corruption and a weak potential for economic growth through formal and legal enterprises. And despite efforts to curb narcotics trafficking through the country,[45] an ample supply of opium from Afghanistan, continued demand for these drugs, and actors willing to enable their transit and trade have all played a role in perpetuating Tajikistan's security problems.

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[44] Heathershaw, 2005, p. 39.

[45] See, for instance, the partnerships established by the government of Tajikistan, the European Union, and the UN Development Programme to help with the detection of narcotics at border crossings (Hugh Biggar, "Tajikistan Tackles Drug Trafficking," United Nations Development Programme, June 2009).

Similarities and Differences Between Tajikistan and Mexico

Tajikistan and Mexico share a number of important characteristics. First, Tajikistan's economy has significant informal and illicit dimensions that weaken the government's revenue streams and shift the control of labor and resources to less-than-reputable actors. Second, Tajikistan has areas that are not subject to official governance. Finally, it is a transshipment corridor for substantial quantities of opium and other narcotics. Tajikistan's security situation was (and still is) similar in many ways to that of Mexico, principally because both countries share the dubious distinction of being major transshipment corridors for a highly valuable narcotics industry. Where they differ is in the factors surrounding the rise of the narcotics trade in their respective territories.

Violence

Tajikistan is not just a transshipment corridor. It is also part of a region that suffers from significant levels of conflict and unrest. Numerous insurgent groups and criminal organizations operate in, out of, or near Tajikistan and the other Central Asian states. Perhaps most consequentially, Tajikistan shares a long and largely unprotected border with Afghanistan, a country that has been a locus of conflict for the past three decades and is also the world's largest opium producer and exporter. Mexico's long border with the United States is not an apt comparison. Tajikistan's geographic disposition along the Silk Road has made it a hub for trade and transport for centuries. More recently, its location has helped make it a hub for the opium trade and for the people and organizations involved with that trade.

Indiscriminate Mayhem or "Anomic Violence"

Indiscriminate mayhem or acts of anomic violence were largely absent from the conflict in Tajikistan. For this reason, an analysis of the similarities and differences between Tajikistan and Mexico in this respect are not particularly relevant for our purposes.

Traditional Threat/Insurgency

The conflict in Tajikistan can be aptly described as a traditional insurgency. The Tajik government and its associated security forces battled the United Tajik Opposition for control of the capital, Dushanbe. However, a stalemate settled in toward the end of 1992 when neither side was able to gain the upper hand. The insurgents established secure bases in the mountainous areas north and east of the capital, along with rear bases in Afghanistan.[46] For the Mexican government and security forces, Tajikistan is best regarded as an example of how *not* to deal with conflict and instability. With the help of Russian soldiers, Tajik COIN forces employed brutal methods against the insurgents, inflicting significant civilian casualties in the process. Ultimately, the government was forced to offer substantial concessions to the insurgents, who entered various sectors of the government after the Peace and National Reconciliation Accord.

Ethnically Motivated Violence

Because Mexico does not have a high level of ethnically motivated violence, lessons for coping with this challenge are not particularly relevant for our purposes.

Lack of Economic Opportunities

As mentioned earlier, Tajikistan's economy is as much informal and illicit as it is formal and licit. The Tajik economy does not present Tajiks with many opportunities; Mexico's economy similarly limits choices for Mexicans. While Tajikistan does maintain some primary industries, there are few legitimate economic opportunities available that can support even a modest lifestyle. Tens (if not hundreds) of thousands of Tajiks have migrated elsewhere for work, and many find their livelihoods on the black market. But unlike in Mexico, engaging in narcotics trafficking in Tajikistan is likely less of a choice than a means of survival.

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[46] Dadmehr, 2003.

Weapon Availability

As recounted earlier, criminal elements infiltrated the Tajik government while warlords retained their positions as the heads of private armies.[47] Nonstate actors were able to avoid relinquishing power primarily through their access to weapons. Old Soviet arsenals were dumped onto local markets throughout Central and South Asia, and these arms have found their way into the hands of nonstate actors in Tajikistan and neighboring countries, such as Uzbekistan and Afghanistan.

Competition over a Resource

The scope and degree of the violence that Mexico is experiencing is at least partly a consequence of the country's valuable drug trade. And the proceeds generated by the drug trade are at least partly used to finance this violence. Cause and consequence are thus difficult to distinguish. Nonetheless, the competitors, their motivations, and their victims are mostly clear. This cannot necessarily be said for Tajikistan, where both the government and its competitors are beneficiaries of the drug trade. Thus, it is unclear whether shutting down Tajikistan's criminal and insurgent groups would necessarily slow the flow of narcotics though the country or whether this action would merely shift control of the market to "less" shadowy forces. While it is likely that levels of violence and conflict in Tajikistan would drop if the government could secure its territory, it is not clear whether this would necessarily improve many of the other conditions that negatively affect life in Tajikistan.

Ungoverned Spaces

There are a number of enclaves in Tajikistan where criminals, warlords, insurgents, or all three hold as much or more power than the Tajik government. These areas serve as sanctuaries for these groups and provide safe haven for the planning and conduct of illicit activities. Groups like the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, in particular, use Tajikistan as a base for militant and trafficking operations throughout the region.

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[47] See Paoli et al., 2007, p. 954.

State/Institutional Weakness

If Tajikistan was not a failed state during its civil war, it was certainly on the verge of becoming one. Tajikistan was in poor economic shape when the Soviet Union dissolved. This condition was aggravated significantly during Tajikistan's civil war as hundreds of thousands of people fled the country to escape the conflict and find work. Tajikistan's massive economic displacement coincided with the rise of the illicit economy and drug trafficking. The gaps, if not fissures, between labor supply and demand—which still exist—could not be filled by the formal and informal Tajik economy. They have almost certainly been filled by opportunities in narcotics trafficking and similar or associated criminal industries. Apart from being profitable, the narcotics-trafficking industry has provided one of the very few lucrative employment alternatives following the country's independence and civil war.

Patronage/Corruption

Perhaps the *sine qua non* of many of Tajikistan's manifold problems, and the one that contributes manifestly to increased levels of corruption, a degree of economic stagnation, the presence of armed criminal groups, and the perpetuation of conflict and violence, is its position as a major transshipment corridor for opium and other narcotics. Drug profits have quite clearly been used to corrupt Tajikistan's government and have, at a minimum, altered the trajectory of its official economy. Drug profits are also a motive for at least some of Tajikistan's border unrest: There is evidence suggesting that Tajikistan's insurgent organizations deliberately devote some portion of their operations to destabilizing border areas as a way to "maintain and secure narcotics transportation routes."[48] Even efforts designed to reduce the flow of narcotics through Tajikistan have had less than positive outcomes. The money donated by international organizations to help secure Tajikistan's borders and thwart narcotics trafficking have indeed improved border control and law enforcement. But these efforts have also resulted in the consolidation of the narcotics trade: Bribes have consequently gotten more

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[48] Engvall, 2006, p. 839.

expensive, and better-resourced traffickers have crowded out traffickers who are unable to make the necessary payments.[49]

Lessons for Mexico

In sum, Tajikistan is not the most apt comparison for Mexico. Mexico has not suffered a near political and economic collapse, and it does not border an active war zone. But Tajikistan does suffer from being a major narcotics transshipment corridor and it thus offers many small lessons for Mexico: Profit is corrupting, poverty and economic disloca-tion motivate people, and conflict many times breeds further conflict. Perhaps the most significant lesson from Tajikistan is that the factors that contribute to its history of violence and conflict are conceptu-ally difficult to distinguish and even more difficult to disaggregate. This problem seems to have only worsened over time. Conflict, poor economic conditions, and a state's inability to secure its territory and boundaries appear to be mutually reinforcing factors in perpetuating violence. And once these factors have become ensconced within the "normal" operations of a state, they will likely be difficult to dislodge. The longer a conflict endures, the more entrenched its actors and their behaviors will become. A durable conflict will thus require policies and solutions that are part of a long-term, holistic approach: Focusing on one or even a few factors in a piecemeal manner is likely to be ineffec-tive because the system will adapt to these pressures.

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[49] See Paoli et al., 2007, p. 967.

Afghanistan (2001–2013)

Case Selection Criteria: Warlordism, Resource Insurgency, Ungoverned Spaces, High Level of Organized Crime

The growth of Afghanistan's illicit economy in general and opium production specifically has transformed the conflict there, along with the Afghan state and economy. The illicit economy, dominated by the opium industry, has grown so large that it is difficult to separate it from Afghanistan's increasingly trivial licit economy. The funds generated by the illicit economy have not only fueled the violence in Afghanistan, but they have also contributed to widespread corruption and a dysfunctional citizen-state relationship. While at one time the conflict in Afghanistan could have been described as an ideological struggle or an insurgency against foreign invaders and the government that these invaders helped to establish, it is now more of a resource insurgency than anything else. Although ideology and the insurgent's cause cannot be ignored, the growth of the opium industry, recently valued in the billions of dollars, or roughly half the country's total GDP,[1] has been transformative: The opium trade and violence in Afghanistan have become intertwined. Conflict and violence are now such integral parts of day-to-day life that, as Jonathan Goodhand argues, an end to

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[1] Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate, *Afghanistan's Narco War: Breaking the Link Between Drug Traffickers and Insurgents*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, August 10, 2009, pp. 1, 5. It is estimated that a majority of the heroin sold in Europe and nearly all sold in Russia and Central Asia can be traced to Afghanistan (Lowry Taylor, *The Nexus of Terrorism and Drug Trafficking in the Golden Crescent: Afghanistan*, thesis, Carlisle, Pa.: U.S. Army War College, 2006, p. 7).

the conflict in Afghanistan would significantly disrupt systems of "production and exchange" that have evolved out of the opium economy.[2] The opium industry has become both a reason and means to support the continuation of conflict and violence in Afghanistan. While similar conditions by no means prevail in Mexico, it is important to note how the value of an illicit good transformed the conflict in Afghanistan and has completely perverted notions of governance and security.

Conflict and Violence in Afghanistan

Although Afghanistan is not unique in playing host to an insurgency, it *is* unique in that the narcotics trade has played such a prominent role in the duration and evolution of the insurgency. The transformative effect of the opium industry on the conflict in Afghanistan and the state's governance cannot be overstated. Opium fuels the insurgency, and Afghanistan is presently the world's largest opium producer.[3] It was estimated in 2005 that profits from Afghanistan's drug trade were equivalent to 60 percent of the state's legal GDP.[4] Goodhand describes opium in Afghanistan as simultaneously a conflict good, an illicit commodity, and a "means of survival."[5] While the current violence cannot fully be divorced from the conflicts that have engulfed the country since 1979, neither can it be separated from the rise of the illicit economy in Afghanistan and the consequent or parallel transformation of the relationship between the Afghan state, its citizenry, and the insur-

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[2]   Jonathan Goodhand, "Frontiers and Wars: The Opium Economy and Afghanistan," *Journal of Agrarian Change*, Vol. 5, No. 2, April 2005, p. 211.

[3]   Emma Graham-Harrison, "Afghanistan's Poppy Farmers Plant Record Opium Crop, UN Report Says," *The Guardian*, November 13, 2013. Afghanistan's position has not changed despite years of violence and coalition occupation. See Jonathan Goodhand, "From Holy War to Opium War? A Case Study of the Opium Economy in North Eastern Afghanistan," *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 19, No. 2, 2000, p. 267.

[4]   Vanda Felbab-Brown, "Afghanistan: When Counternarcotics Undermines Counterterrorism," *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No. 4, Fall 2005, p. 57.

[5]   Goodhand, 2005, p. 211.

gency. And while "total" violence might be down in Afghanistan, Afghans still have little personal security.[6]

The Rise of the Illicit Economy

Although Afghanistan has been a significant opium producer since the 1950s,[7] opium's value as a share of Afghanistan's economy has grown substantially since the early 1990s and especially following the coalition invasion in 2001.[8] As could be expected, the areas of Afghanistan that could be classified as ungoverned spaces expanded in the wake of the 2001 invasion, and Afghan warlords, many of whom were supported by the coalition after the fall of the Taliban, expanded opium production in these territories.[9] The coalition paid for the support of these warlords by largely turning a blind eye to these activities.

It was under these conditions that the opium trade in Afghanistan recrudesced and blossomed. Absent other viable means of generating income, and under pressure from local and provincial warlords,[10] Afghan farmers began to increase their production of opium. Unsur-

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[6] See International Committee of the Red Cross, "Afghanistan: Insecurity at a Critical Level for Civilians," press release, July 14, 2011.

[7] Merz, 2008, p. 17.

[8] Afghanistan surpassed Burma's opium production in 1991 (Pierre-Arnaud Chouvy, "Afghanistan's Opium Production in Perspective," *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 4, No. 1, February 2006, p. 21). See also Merz, 2008, p. 19. See the discussion of Afghanistan's war economy in Goodhand, 2005, pp. 198–203. By 2000, Afghanistan's economy was dependent on opium production for tax revenue, export income, and employment (Alfred W. McCoy, "The Costs of Covert Warfare: Airpower, Drugs, and Warlords in the Conduct of U.S. Foreign Policy," *New England Journal of Public Policy*, Vol. 19, No. 1, 2003, p. 233).

[9] See Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate, 2009, p. 4, and Barnett R. Rubin, "Saving Afghanistan," *Foreign Affairs*, January–February 2007, p. 77. Seth Jones argues that U.S. assistance to warlords weakened the central Afghan government. See Seth G. Jones, "The Rise of Afghanistan's Insurgency: State Failure and Jihad," *International Security*, Vol. 32, No. 4, Spring 2008, p. 26.

[10] Afghan warlords and their proxies offered protection services not only to opium farmers but also to those transporting their products across Afghanistan's porous borders. See Antonio Giustozzi, "War and Peace Economies of Afghanistan's Strongmen," *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 14, No. 1, 2007, p. 81.

prisingly, opium production progressively displaced other crops and other, more licit activities.[11] The revenue generated by opium production had significant and progressive micro- and macroeconomic effects in Afghanistan: It destabilized Afghanistan's currency and created inflationary pressures as both wages and costs increased.[12] It also became an important source of credit and, as Goodhand describes it, the "closest thing there is to a national market."[13] As the insurgency grew in strength, it too got in (or back in) on the opium business, partly as a means to generate the funds needed to fight coalition and Afghan forces and partly as a means to exercise control over Afghanistan's economy.

The Transformation of the Citizen-State Relationship

The growth of the opium trade and the concurrent expansion of the insurgency further deteriorated the already tenuous relationship between the Afghan government and its citizenry. After three decades of conflict, Afghans were—conceptually if not in practice—nearly divorced from governance, at least in the traditional sense. This relationship withered even further as the insurgency began to replace the state as a provider of welfare and governance and as a major player in the Afghan economy.

The insurgency not only used the opium trade to gain control over large portions of an impoverished citizenry and their property, but it also used the profits to expand its control over the government through bribes and other forms of corruption.[14] Indeed, bribes and cor-

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[11] See Felbab-Brown, 2005, p. 59. This in some ways mirrors what has happened in Mexico, where being involved in the drug trade is sometimes the only viable means of income generation.

[12] See Goodhand, 2005, pp. 208–209, and Felbab-Brown, 2005, p. 59.

[13] Jonathan Goodhand, "Corrupting or Consolidating the Peace? The Drugs Economy and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding in Afghanistan," *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 15, No. 3, 2008, p. 415.

[14] Goodhand, 2008, p. 412.

ruption became "a major part of the Afghan economy."[15] Positions in the Ministry of Interior Affairs and the Afghan Border Police, as well as other government positions that sometimes commanded a salary of as little as $60 per month,[16] were being auctioned off for hundreds of thousands of dollars.[17] In turn, the Afghan citizenry became progressively less trustful of the state and increasingly turned to the insurgency for basic governance, the resolution of grievances, and other forms of justice.[18]

What Was Done to Improve the Situation?

Few official measures have improved the situation in Afghanistan. The violence there continues as the opium industry flourishes. Initially, the coalition supported Afghanistan's warlords and other power brokers in an effort to suppress remnants of the Taliban government. These warlords, in turn, used their newfound autonomy to expand opium production and other illicit ventures in the areas that they controlled. Later, elements of the coalition-supported Karzai government, if not already so disposed, were quickly corrupted by opium profits and money from hijacked aid and development funds. This, in turn, further undermined the trust of the people. Other official attempts to reduce violence and the overall influence of the opium trade were also largely unsuccessful, if not counterproductive. Augmented counternarcotics efforts provided a reason for Afghan officials to extract even more exorbitant bribes from Afghanistan's drug traffickers.[19] Crop eradication efforts demanded by coalition partners often pushed opium farmers

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[15] Douglas A. Wissing, *Funding the Enemy: How US Taxpayers Bankroll the Taliban*, Amherst, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 2012, p. 89.

[16] See B. Rubin, 2007, p. 69.

[17] See Wissing, 2012, pp. 67, 87.

[18] Wissing, 2012, p. 90.

[19] B. Rubin, 2007, p. 69.

deeper into the arms of the insurgency,[20] and the Taliban frequently exploited these efforts to gain support for its movement.[21]

How Did It End Up?

This conflict in Afghanistan is ongoing, and any discussion of how the situation will end up is purely speculative. Although it is probably safe to say that whatever the result, the opium trade, along with the profits it engenders and its saliency in the evolution of the conflict in Afghanistan, will undoubtedly play a prominent role. That is, whether the violence in Afghanistan increases *or* abates, we can be sure that opium profits will play a part in the outcome.

Similarities and Differences Between Afghanistan and Mexico

Although Afghanistan is very different from Mexico, chiefly insofar as it is in the midst of a full-blown insurgency, it, like the Burma case, nonetheless potentially portends how events could unfold in parts of Mexico if that country's drug trafficking problems were significantly aggravated or if other circumstances were to change dramatically for the worse for long periods. For one thing, Afghanistan is what might be termed a worst-case scenario or perfect storm of persistent conflict, narcotics trade, state weakness, and extremely low levels of development. But, more precisely, Afghanistan is unlike Mexico in at least four significant ways. Although these differences set Afghanistan apart from Mexico, this is not to say that they do not have any bearing on how the situation in Mexico might evolve or how future events might unfold. For instance, significant foreign involvement in Mexico, though unlikely, is not wholly impossible. Certain triggers could warrant at least a degree of international involvement in what are largely, at present, Mexican internal affairs. For instance, if Mexico's narcotics

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[20] Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate, 2009, p. 6. This was also seen in Peru and Colombia.

[21] B. Rubin, 2007, pp. 68–69.

market continues to expand and substantial violence bleeds across the border into the United States, it is possible that the Mexican government will seek greater and perhaps more overt U.S. involvement in its security affairs or that the United States will compel the Mexican government to accept greater U.S. involvement to control the violence, disrupt the narcotics market, or both.

Violence

Afghanistan is no stranger to violence. Indeed, the country has been subject to some form of conflict—foreign invasion, civil war, or some variant of insurgency-counterinsurgency—since 1979. Afghanistan is also no stranger to the ancillary activities that seem to shadow long periods of violence; it has been the locus of a regional and illicit conflict economy, stretching from Northwestern India to the former Soviet Central Asian Republics, for more than three decades. As a result, the people of Afghanistan have been somewhat inured to both persistent violence and their role as producers and consumers in a conflict economy. After 30 years, the two are nearly inseparable, as each forms part of a necessary but mutually deadly and parasitical symbiosis. Mexico is not "here" yet, but many of its citizens are certainly becoming more accustomed to violence in their lives.

Indiscriminate Mayhem or "Anomic Violence"

Indiscriminate mayhem or acts of anomic violence were largely absent from the conflict in Afghanistan. Therefore, similarities and differences between Afghanistan and Mexico in this respect are not particularly relevant for our purposes.

Traditional Threat/Insurgency

Unlike in Mexico, Afghanistan's military and police forces are, at best, moderately effective. This is partly because these forces are still being recruited and trained, are poorly funded, and face a determined threat. But corruption also plays an important role. Even where forces are capable, their paltry salaries and an ingrained culture of corruption prevent them from consistently enforcing the law in a fair and transparent manner. Regardless of the cause, Afghanistan lacks central, pro-

vincial, and local forces that are both capable and willing to enforce the law impartially and effectively.

Ethnically Motivated Violence

Various parties to the conflict in Afghanistan appeal to and interpret Islam to support or justify their behaviors and activities. Religion and ideology play important roles in Afghanistan: They codify norms, are used as justification for certain behaviors, and are critical in individual and group identity distinctions. Religion and ideology also provide spiritual and existential rationales that can be leveraged alone or in combination with other motives. For instance, religious edicts (e.g., the need to remove an apostate regime) can be cited as the reason for engaging in profitable illicit activities, such as engaging in or supporting the production and sale of opium. Whether one motive trumps the other is irrelevant: Both are leveraged as needed to justify or continue the conflict. By no means can the violence in Mexico be categorized as either ideological or religious.

Lack of Economic Opportunities

Although economic and employment alternatives have always been very limited in Afghanistan, this problem has worsened as the opium trade has come to dominate the country's economy. Opium is a hearty crop and can flourish even in Afghanistan's rough agricultural conditions. Furthermore, the opium market is large, and its trade is accordingly highly profitable. Although it is likely that many Afghans—for a variety of reasons—would prefer to be employed in another trade, opium's profitability, combined with the pressures exerted by warlords and the insurgency, has left them with few alternatives; they must continue to produce the crops that have contributed to the dysfunction of the government and to continued violence and conflict in the country.

Weapon Availability

Even if drug farmers and traffickers are not heavily armed—though some are—the warlords and insurgent groups that they pay for protection most certainly are. The modestly trained and equipped forces of the Afghan Ministry of Interior Affairs are no match for these sea-

soned and well-armed and -protected traffickers. This mirrors comparative conditions in Mexico, where the police are often outgunned by VDTOs and even street hustlers. Even Afghan police and military forces are often overmatched by those involved in the opium trade. For the time being, the only forces that are sufficiently trained and can call upon enough firepower to regularly best these traffickers in armed conflict are the foreign forces serving as part of the coalition.

Competition over a Resource

Opium, whether refined into heroin or not, is a high value-to-volume illicit product. That is, much like cocaine in Mexico, opium and its derivatives command significant sums of money in proportion to their size and weight. Opium products are thus rather easily stored and transported and do not require significant investments in equipment to move from place to place. Thus, even if Afghanistan had well-guarded borders, interdicting the flow of opium products would still be a difficult undertaking. Regardless, the amount of money that could be obtained from even small shipments would make the opium trade a highly profitable endeavor.

Ungoverned Spaces

Afghanistan's border is notoriously porous and difficult to control. Not surprisingly, this is a condition that the insurgency—like the VDTOs in Mexico—recognizes and regularly exploits to its benefit,[22] not only for the purposes of drug trafficking but also for sanctuary, recruitment, and the transshipment of other licit and illicit goods. Although it cannot be proven, it is likely that conflict in Afghanistan would have evolved differently if the state or coalition forces had even modest control over entrance and egress points along Afghanistan's border. Certainly, it would be significantly easier to interdict the flow of narcotics to foreign markets if the Afghan state could control its own borders.

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[22] See Thomas H. Johnson, "On the Edge of the Big Muddy: The Taliban Resurgence in Afghanistan," *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 2007, p. 114.

State/Institutional Weakness

Although Afghanistan is not particularly ethnically diverse, the degree of foreign involvement in its affairs, from all sides, has made the conflict there quite cosmopolitan. And while the product of this diverse foreign interest and involvement has been some semblance of stability, it has also disrupted allegiances, fractured long-lasting relationships, and, worse, provided sustenance for the continuation of violence.

Properly accounting for the relationship between foreign involvement in Afghanistan and the perpetuation of violence is no easy task. The number of foreign actors and the effects of their activities are not easily counted or delineated and are not particularly amenable to disaggregation. For example, not only is there a large international contingent of forces and national and international NGOs operating in Afghanistan under an assortment of UN mandates, but Afghanistan is also subject to the involvement and influence of neighboring states and seemingly innumerable foreign substate organizations. The effects of this involvement have been simultaneously constructive and deleterious. For instance, while the coalition and associated or aligned NGOs do not have a persistent presence throughout the country, they each wield enough military and economic power, respectively, to significantly influence the behavior of the insurgency, as well as the Afghan government and people.

The coalition is capable of directing highly capable military forces throughout Afghanistan to quell the insurgency's activities, while well-funded NGOs can provision direly needed social services to Afghan communities. This is a net positive. But when these military capabilities and social and economic activities are piecemeal or support only short-term gains, they are as likely to fuel violence and contribute to the fractured long-term relationship between the Afghan people and Afghanistan's central and provincial governments. This is a net negative. Disentangling the helpful from the injurious is sometimes difficult. Nonetheless, it is certain that long-term and diverse foreign involvement has complicated the conflict in Afghanistan and has quite probably contributed as much to the continuance of violence and instability as it has to its abatement.

Patronage/Corruption

Corruption is endemic in Afghanistan, and this is something that is not lost on Afghanistan's citizenry. Corruption in Afghanistan is, in fact, far worse than in Mexico. Because corruption, especially official corruption, is so pervasive, many Afghans are equally (if not more likely) to appeal to the insurgency's shadow government and court systems for dispute resolution and justice. Absent the trust of its people, the Afghan state cannot hope to receive or retain the support necessary to subvert or combat the very organizations that are largely responsible for the violence and conflict that have plagued that country for well over a decade.

Lessons for Mexico

While Mexico is by no means Afghanistan and is very unlikely to become Afghanistan, what has transpired in Afghanistan is worth noting, at least as a worst-case cautionary tale. State weakness exacerbated by decades of conflict, combined with a powerful insurgency, rampant unemployment,[23] and an already developed illicit economy dominated by the opium trade, has worsened and sustained conflict conditions in Afghanistan. Corruption has flourished, the Afghan people have become dependent on opium production for their survival,[24] and the insurgency has continued to battle the COIN forces, despite the best efforts of the International Security Assistance Force and the Afghan government. And despite recent drops in aggregate violence, Afghans are still insecure, and no policy tool employed over the past 12 years has done much to relieve this condition. Afghanistan has drifted so far away from being a "normal" state that few policy options or solutions remain viable.

As the conflict wears on, the insurgency is becoming further enriched and more deeply entrenched in the governance and economic

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[23] B. Rubin, 2007, p. 67.

[24] There are few economic alternatives in Afghanistan that are not associated with opium production in some way. See the discussion in Felbab-Brown, 2005, p. 56.

affairs of the Afghan state. As Thomas Johnson and M. Chris Mason warned in 2007, "Afghanistan today is in danger of capsizing in a perfect storm of insurgency, terrorism, narcotics, and warlords."[25] The violence that has plagued Afghanistan—at least for the past decade or so—is for all intents and purposes the precipitation resulting from this perfect storm. The illicit wartime economy that has evolved out of the conflict can no longer be separated from any notion of a licit peacetime economy,[26] and the Afghan state is as beholden to the health of this economy as are members of the insurgency.

While Mexico does not suffer from the same infirmities as Afghanistan, it has in some areas involuntarily ceded control of its territory to groups not wholly dissimilar to the criminal entrepreneurs operating within and across Afghanistan's borders. Whether or not these areas of Mexico ever reach the depths witnessed in portions of Afghanistan is immaterial; the lessons borne of experiences in Afghanistan should ward off any misperceptions of how bad things can actually get.

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[26] See Goodhand, 2005, p. 211.

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Drug-related violence has become a very serious problem in Mexico. Of particular concern to U.S. policymakers, violent drug-trafficking organizations produce, transship, and deliver tens of billions of dollars' worth of narcotics into the United States annually. The activities of these organizations are not confined to drug trafficking; they extend to such criminal enterprises as human trafficking, weapon trafficking, kidnapping, money laundering, extortion, bribery, and racketeering. Then, there is the violence: Recent incidents have included assassinations of politicians and judges; attacks against rival organizations, associated civilians, and the police and other security forces; and seemingly random violence against innocent bystanders. Despite the scope of the threat to Mexico's security, these groups are not well understood, and optimal strategies to combat them have not been identified. Comparison between Mexico and Colombia is a tempting and frequently made analogy and source for policy recommendations. A series of historical case studies offers a foundation for a more thorough comparative assessment. Regions around the world have faced similar challenges and may hold lessons for Mexico. One point is clear, however: Mexico is not Colombia. As the historical record shows, Mexico is not particularly like any other case characterized by "warlordism," resource insurgency, ungoverned spaces, and organized crime. Despite the lack of a perfectly analogous case, Mexico stands to benefit from historical lessons and efforts that were correlated with the greatest improvements in countries facing similar challenges. A companion volume describes the study's approach to assessing each historical case and presents findings from the overall analyses.

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